In This Issue: Two Prize Contests—$7500.00 In All

The Black Cat

ESTABLISHED 1895

MAY 1920

Prize Entries By

R. de S. HORN
CHESLA C. SHERLOCK
HELEN TOPPING MILLER

Stories By

CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES
MARION HILL
JAMES HENRY THOMPSON
RAMSEY BENSON
HORACE J. SIMPSON
and others

MEOWS FROM THE MOVIES
By ALICE GLENISTER

20 CENTS

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The Black Cat

Established 1895

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IN CASH PRIZES
for the Best Novelettes and Short Stories

Many writers whose stories are most in demand by magazine editors to-day started their careers by writing stories for the BLACK CAT and taking part in the old prize story contests that made the BLACK CAT famous. For a quarter of a century the BLACK CAT has been the "open door" to new writers; for a quarter of a century it has devoted itself exclusively to the advancement of short-story writing.

Among those who have had their first stories published in the BLACK CAT, or have been competitors in previous contests, are :

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In this issue the publishers announce the conditions of two prize story contests, both now open.

The $2,500 Novelette Contest is something new for the BLACK CAT, as the magazine has never published novelettes. The announcement of this contest (see page 2) marks a change of policy and is another forward step in the magazine's career.

For the conditions of the $5,000 Short Story Contest see pages 122-125. Writers should read the conditions carefully before submitting stories.

The two contests are entirely separate, but the conditions are the same with two exceptions.

The publishers wish particularly to call attention to Article 6 of the Conditions, which provides for payment at regular rates, in addition to the prize awards, for all stories submitted in the contest and found to be acceptable for publication.

$2,500.00
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2nd "	750	4th "	250

CONDITIONS:

The conditions of this contest are the same as those governing the short-story contest (see pages 122-125) with two exceptions: (1) novelettes may range in length from 10,000 to 25,000 words; (2) the competition will close August 31st, 1920.

Manuscripts should be addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th Street, New York, N. Y.," and envelopes or wrappers should be plainly marked "Prize Contest." Stories fulfilling the conditions of the contest and found to be acceptable for publication in the BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates on acceptance. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and within sixty days of the closing date of the contest awards will be announced in the BLACK CAT and paid in cash.

The publishers cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity for stories of plot and action. The prize winners will be the plot builders; they will be the writers who succeed in packing into 25,000 words or less dramatic and conflicting incidents and actions occurring in the shortest possible time in the lives of the fewest possible characters—the whole developed to a powerful climax and a reasonable and satisfying conclusion.

Write of present-day life, and avoid the morbid, gruesome, supernatural and unpleasantly tragic.

JUST BETWEEN THIEVES

By R. de S. HORN

Entered in the BLACK CAT *Prize Story Contest*

AT ten o'clock one night, the U. S. S. *Nelson* had over two hundred yards of brand new four-inch Manila hawser coiled neatly down on her quarter-deck. She also had, posted over it, a brand new sentry, a recruit of less than two weeks' service. The *Nelson,* be it said, had only owned that hawser some twelve hours, having stolen it only that morning from Hansen, the yard rigging-master.

The *Guerry,* sister ship of the *Nelson,* lying just across the dock, had no hawser; but she had an Irish bo's'n's mate of no character whatever. Four-inch Manila hawsers not being on their allowance lists, the only way destroyers can get them is by stealing them; and the Irish bo's'n, having seen that lovely new cable being coiled down on the *Nelson's* deck, yearned to have it for his own. So he, by way of the dock, and two companions, by way of a dinghy with muffled oars, paid a little visit to the *Nelson* that night. Finding the sentry eager and ambitious to learn, the bo's'n went to a lot of trouble instructing him as to various instruments round about the deck, and particularly as to one known as the "torpedo detector." And while he was thus worthily engaged, his two accomplices in the dinghy put the coil of Manila through a disappearing act.

After which, midnight came—at twelve o'clock, as usual.

On the *Nelson* next morning, at "mast," it had been proved beyond doubt that the brand new four-inch hawser had disappeared during the sentry's watch; and also that at midnight the sentry had been found peering down through a little hole in the top of the deep-sea sounding machine, which he persisted in calling a "torpedo detector." The captain had promptly put the sentry in the brig. But the sentry didn't mind; every time he looked through the bars he was glad he was inside. For on the outside he could see the rest of the *Nelson's* crew raging murderously up and down; he could also hear what they intended to do with him when they caught him. It made his blood run cold to hear them. And they kept getting more and more murderous every time they had to go up on the topside for something or other, and thereby expose themselves to the taunts and derision hurled at them by the *Guerry's* crew just over the way. Even the *Guerry's* skipper, a full-fledged lieutenant-commander, so far forgot the dignity of his gold stripes as to "kid" the *Nelson's* captain.

"I say, Thomas," he called teasingly across the fifty feet of dock and salt water, "what's this new gadget you've got over there, called a 'torpedo detector'? New invention of your own, maybe?"

"If I ever invented anything," retorted the *Nelson's* skipper, impolitely, "it 'ud be a burglar detector. Then I'd always know where the *Guerry* was!"

"Naughty-naughty!" chided the other, shaking a forefinger rebukingly.

"Gr-r-rr!" growled the *Nelson's* skipper, viciously. "Blankety bunch of thieves!"

"Now-w, Thomas, you know there isn't a man aboard the *Guerry* that ever stole anything."

"Neither did Jesse James!" was the reply. "When I think of the way they've been running down poor old Jesse all these years—and to think that he never even saw a torpedo-boat destroyer!"

"You do us a wrong, a great wrong, with your insinuations," complained the *Guerry's* captain in aggrieved tones. "If you're referring to a four-inch hawser, I want you to know that we didn't steal it. It was thrown at us."

"Of course!"

"Well, listen and you'll see. My bo's'n's mate and a couple of men are rowing around in the dinghy last night—just taking a little row for pleasure—"

"Rowing around for pleasure—at ten o'clock at night!"

"—and my bo's'n goes aboard to talk to your sentry, he looked so lonesome."

"Uh-huh."

"And while he was talking to him a piece of old hawser fell off the deck right down into the dinghy! Knowing that if you were throwing it away like that, you evidently didn't want it, the dinghy crew brought it back with them when they came in."

"Well, what's the rest of it?"

"Nothing. Only when I saw it this morning it looked almost like brand new Manila to me. What was wrong with it you were throwing it away for, Thomas?"

The *Nelson's* skipper turned his back and started to walk away in dignified silence, but reconsidered and came back.

"Look here, Simmsy," he said determinedly, "you've got it on us now, I admit, but I'll bet you a million dollars I get that hawser back from you, yet!"

"All of it?" inquired the *Guerry's* commander, with exaggerated politeness. "you don't mean *all* of it?"

The *Nelson's* skipper gritted his teeth. "Every damned inch of it!" he promised firmly.

This was in June, and consequently the season for "War Games."

So the very next Sunday found a number of old Third Division ships gathered at a spot away out in the Atlantic, instead of at their usual back-channel moorings in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Along with them were two or three old cruisers and several exceedingly ancient-looking torpedo-boats. They were all using forced draft and kicking up a tremendous smoke, trying to make good in their character of a large and hostile enemy force; for according to the data for this particular war game they were the entire Green Fleet, composed of sixteen battleships, five battle-cruisers, seven light cruisers and twenty-two destroyers, all on their way west to attack the American coast.

Back in Gardner's Bay were huddled the battleships of the Blue, or Home Fleet, outnumbered and bluer than usual. At various other points along the Northern coast the six submarine divisions dawdled at anchor in the blistering sun, while their dungareed crews dangled their feet in the water and cursed the iron hulks beneath them for "Blankety-blank fireless cookers!"

And scattered along the whole East coast, heading seaward and dipping their noses into the Atlantic swells, were the pitching and floundering "boats" of the Blue Flotilla, combing the ocean industriously in an effort to establish contact with the enemy. And of these destroyers were the *Nelson*, the *Trapham*, and the *Guerry*, units of the 'Steenth Division, now divided up over five hundred miles of Eastern approach. With their sleek sides glistening they fretted and fumed along through the murky sea, while back at Washington the Department sat in its

cushioned chairs and speculated pleasantly on the probabilities, possibilities, and the ultimate outcome.

And then suddenly, with no warning whatever, a young but fully-grown hurricane sneaked out from among the Caribbean Keys, sharpened its claws on the Bahama Islands, and pouncing upon the North Atlantic shook and tore it until its waves rattled and great white furrows appeared in its quivering surface.

In less than twenty minutes the War Game was definitely postponed. The hostile admiral of the Green Fleet suddenly became tremendously amicable and possessed of a warm hankering for the sheltering reaches of Long Island and the Sound. He said as much by wireless to the commander of the Blue Fleet back in Gardner's Bay. And in the ten minutes that it took his message to go sparking through the storm and back again, the howling gale tore loose all the exposed tarpaulins and weather-cloths in his whole squadron and bore them gleefully away to leeward. And the surging seas pounded away at the gray bows, thundered along the slewing decks, and hungrily licked up in passage everything loose: sand-lockers, deck-houses, lifeboats.

It was undoubtedly a terrific storm through which the Green Fleet lumbered. And the Green Fleet was getting an unmerciful drubbing. Old sailors became seasick and young sailors became morbidly despondent.

But if it was a tough sea for the battleships, it was tougher still for the Blue Flotilla, which had been just about to establish contact. Like a setting hen gathering her chicks before a rain, the flotilla flagship was clucking out wireless messages to her scattered brood, trying to locate them and send them in to cover.

The *Nelson*, hanging on by her eyeteeth and shuddering her way forward, picked up her own message in regular turn. It was brief and to the point.

"*Nelson*," it said, "give position."

"Latitude steenty-steen North, longitude umpty-ump West," spluttered back the *Nelson* from her feeble and shaking aerials.

"Acknowledge," came the answer, after an interval. "*Nelson*—make for Chincoteague. Report arrival."

"And thank heavens for that!" said the *Nelson's* commander as he read the dripping message on his spray-drenched bridge; he had to shout to make himself heard. "I'll be darned glad to get back inside the capes. Rotten weather out here—eh, MacBride?"

MacBride, the bo's'n's mate, who was hanging around the bridge as being the handiest, and likewise the dryest, place on the topside, snapped a loose hook on his oilskins. "Rotten as I ever seen it," he yelled back, taking a squint to windward. "That head sea was gettin' mighty nasty on our bow plates. Hear that—?" And with the words came up from forward a solid "thump" as a mighty sea slammed into the descending forefoot just as it slid downward from the crest of the preceding roller. A sudden jerk went through the craft and then a wild shuddering as both screws raced in the spume above the surface.

"Right-o! But she'll be easier now as soon as we get on this new course. That'll give us a quartering sea all the way home. Hello, what's this?"

The messenger from the radio room stood on the bridge again and extended another yellow slip bespattered with spray. The captain took it and held it in the lee of the chattering stormcloth as he read it:

"*Nelson*—hunt for *Guerry*. Sending out distress calls. Latitude umpty-steen North, longitude steenty-ump West."

With a sudden sober look the *Nelson's* skipper pulled aside the cover of the chart board and made a long, searching examination, ending by pencilling two little crosses on the chart. Then he carefully measured off the distance be-

tween with a pair of dividers and compared it with the scale at the margin. When he had finished he shook his head and carefully measured the distance over again.

"Bad," he said, half to himself and half to MacBride at his elbow. "Rotten place to break down, MacBride. We're only a hundred miles out, and she's a good sixty miles inshore of us. Take a look at the compass, MacBride, and tell me where the wind's from."

With a piece of cardboard torn from the back of a signal pad, holding it vertically over the compass, the bo's'n tested the wind.

"She's about sou-sou-east!" he announced after a second trial. "Maybe a quarter east, sir!"

"South-south-east," repeated the commanding officer, bending over the chart again. "In this hemisphere that means she'll work around toward the starboard bow. She'll be driving the *Guerry* right inshore. No place in there for the *Guerry* to anchor, MacBride."

"No, sir. Nearest place she could make 'ud be Bentryport, inside the Horseshoe Hook."

"She can't make that if she's busted down, MacBride."

"No, sir."

The skipper ran his parallel rulers quickly across to the compass rose. "Make the course two-sixty-nine!" he shouted, turning toward the helmsman behind him. "Two—six—nine!"

"Two—six—nine, sir!" yelled back the helmsman, spinning the wheel around.

"Messenger—messenger! Go down to the engineer officer. Tell him to make everything he can and to keep plenty of steam for maneuvering!"

Then turning to the bo's'n again, "MacBride, get all the towline up and bend it to a bridle from the two after tubes. Maybe you better get up some oil, too. But no; we'll need all that oil before we're through, I guess."

"Aye-aye, sir. I'll have her all ready!" responded the bo's'n; and he descended the bridge ladder and carefully made his way aft, hanging on to the hand rope every time a heavy sea came over.

With gathering speed the thin steel shell swept along on the combing seas, rolling and sloughing from crest to crest, while her propellers now raced, now throbbed. And up on the lurching bridge her captain paced uneasily, from compass to chart board and back again, stopping now to watch the fidgeting needle and now to bend over the chart and step off a new distance along the black line he had drawn through the two crosses. At times he glanced over his shoulder at the following sea, and his spray-drenched face grew taut and stern beneath the close-drawn sou'wester. Finally he rose from over the board and laid the dividers aside.

"Ten more miles," he muttered to himself; "we ought to be picking her up before long, if she's still there."

And walking from lookout to lookout, he gave them full and final instructions as to what they were to look for and where they might expect to find it.

It was not a lookout, after all, but the bridge signalman who first discovered it.

"Sail ho!" he screamed, and pointed in a direction about two points on the port bow. And after a minute the others saw what his trained eyes had already made out, a low, slim streak of gray, showing now and again over the up-tossing crests.

"Left fifteen degrees rudder!" called out the captain. "Ease your helm! Meet her! Steady as she is!"

"Steady as she is, sir!" shouted back the helmsman, manipulating the wheel energetically.

"Yes, sir; that's her!" declared the bo's'n, who had now returned to the bridge and was standing close to his commander's elbow. "An awful pounding she's been getting, too. See! Her mainmast's gone!"

"That's the reason we couldn't get her by wireless, I reckon. Wonder how bad

she's done up. Messenger, stand by the engine-room telegraph! One-third speed, both engines!"

"One-third speed, both engines," came the messenger's repetition; then, after a second, "answered, sir!"

"All ready with that towing line, MacBride?"

"All ready, sir. Towing bridle all rigged on the quarter, and five men standing by in the lee of the bridge to go aft and get her out when you give the word, sir."

"Very good, MacBride. Signalman, ask the *Guerry* what's wrong with her!"

The signalman obediently climbed on to a little shelf in the corner of the bridge. As he did so he suddenly became exposed to the full force of the gale which snatched at him and almost carried him over the railing before he could grab it with both hands. The bo's'n leaped forward, and encircling him with both arms, squeezed him tightly against the corner stanchion. After a moment's struggle the signalman steadied himself, and standing as high as he dared above the rail, began to wave both arms violently.

The *Nelson* was now going one-third speed, and under the captain's directions was circling slowly around the *Guerry*, which they could now see was lying dead in the water, rising sluggishly with the crests like a water-logged raft. In addition to her snapped mast, her boats were gone from the davits and her aftermost stack was canted badly to port. About every third roller she failed to lift in time, and the oncoming sea, curling up over her, crashed down over her decks, and then swept forward to batter heavily against the bridge bulkhead.

"Looks like she's got some sort of a drag over the starboard quarter," pointed out the bo's'n.

"Yes. She rides easier to a quartering sea. Simms is a good sailor, all right, and he's doing his best by her! Got any answer there yet, signalman?"

"No, sir, not yet. Wait a second. She's answering now, sir!"

Above the rail of the *Guerry's* battered bridge a pair of arms had suddenly appeared, like a "V," and begun to open and close. When they ceased for a moment the *Nelson's* signalman began semaphoring slowly and with many hurried grabs at the rail, as the ship lurched and plunged. After a few moments he stopped, and the arms on the *Guerry* began to waggle again.

"Says both engines disabled, sir!" interpreted the signalman. "Starboard shaft snapped and tore up the port engine room. They're trying to get the port engine workin' again!"

"Very well. Tell them to stand by to take a tow! MacBride, what is the best way to get a line across?"

"Well, sir, it'll be a hard job! Can't drift one down on a float, I don't believe. These raised poops of our's are just like a jib; and we'll drift faster'n any barrel we could put over, 'less you want to head her up and keep the engines going!"

The skipper shook his head. "Couldn't keep her headed up without too much speed; we'd go right out to sea again. But what's the matter with getting out a lot of heaving-line on a float, running around the *Guerry*, and dragging it across?"

"'Bout the only way, sir! I'll go see to it, sir!"

And so, ten minutes later, the *Nelson*, with a barrel trailing behind her at the end of a thousand-foot line, was trying to snare the *Guerry's* bow, while on that bow a few reckless volunteers, between wave crests, fished desperately after it. For a time it seemed as futile as trying to spear goldfish in a bathtub with a toothpick. Then suddenly a towering wave lifted the barrel clear over the weather-rail and dropped it down on the forecastle, where the heaving line fouled itself and hung. A minute later the pair of arms began waving on her bridge:

"We have your light line, and are ready for the tow. You will have to send over yours, though. Ours in yard being surveyed."

The *Nelson's* skipper turned to his ever-ready bo's'n again. "Send our line over to them, MacBride!" he ordered. And then he swore violently at a survey policy that permits of surveyed articles being removed from shipboard without replacement. Then he immediately forgot all about it in his multifarious and all-absorbing duties as skipper; for getting a disabled nine-hundred-ton destroyer in tow in a heavy sea is more easily ordered than done. The helm has to be tended, distance accurately gauged, and the engines so juggled as to keep everything exactly so, at exactly the right moment. And this is by no means easy when the heavy storm waves are washing the decks and compelling men to drop everything and cling to the life-lines while tons of salty water sweep down and over them.

But there is an end to all things, and eventually the long towing cable was joining the two destroyers with a woven wire link. The *Nelson* threw her rudder over and speeded up her engines slightly. The heavy hawser began to tauten, and then the *Nelson* stopped with a jerk as it suddenly caught up the strain. For a second she hung dead still, panting, and then began to forge ahead as the bow of the *Guerry* swung slowly but obstinately around to follow in her wake. And as the *Nelson* headed up, almost immediately a tremendous sea gave a mighty thump at her bow plates.

The skipper of the *Nelson* turned to his tenth legion. "Enough of that'll play hell with our bow; eh, MacBride?"

"Yes, sir," replied the bo's'n. "But think what it's doing to the *Guerry* back there, with us snagging her bow straight into it! They won't be able to go on her fok's'le at all in five minutes! They almost lost two men cutting loose their drag over the quarter, and that's almost in a lee now!"

The skipper permitted a grin to crop out under his sou'wester. "There isn't any such thing as a lee to-day!" he shouted through the storm as he took up his dividers and prepared to bend over the chart board again. But as he began to step off distances his face was serious once more.

"Wish I knew how many miles we have drifted during the last two hours," he muttered to himself. "Must have been eight at least, or maybe ten. H'm—that puts us pretty close inshore. We're going to have our job cut out to weather the Ledge, even if our bow does hold out. Thirty—forty—forty-five miles—maybe. Well, three hours'll tell us whether we're going to make it or not."

Turning away from the chart, he walked over to the engine-room telegraphs and rang up "standard speed." Then he threw the lever over again until it registered "full speed."

"Messenger!" he ordered. "Go down to the engine room and tell Lieutenant Roberts to give me everything he's got, for the next three hours at least. And no break-downs!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" And the messenger turned, had to wait for someone on the ladder to come up, and then scrambled on his way.

The man who had delayed the messenger at the ladder turned out to be a third-class hospital apprentice. He halted beside the captain and hung on to the rail with both hands as a huge roller came crashing over the bow.

"Sir!" he shouted, "Lieutenant Roberts just got hurt! In the engine room—pitched against an air pump! We've taken him to sickbay. He's unconscious."

"Roberts? Unconscious?" The captain paused as if to make sure he had heard aright. "All right. Find Machinist Bradley and tell him to take charge of the engine room. And tell him to force her all he can! Then find out how badly Mr. Roberts is hurt, and come tell me. MacBride!"

"Here, sir!"

"MacBride, how long do you think she'll stand that head sea?"

"Don't know, sir. She's taking water already, I expect. Quarter-inch plates wasn't made to buck a sea like this, sir. I'll go see, sir."

A few minutes later he climbed back up the bridge ladder, at the heels of the hospital apprentice. It was the apprentice who reached the captain first:

"Mr. Bradley was already there, sir. And he says, 'Aye, aye, sir.' And Mr. Roberts's collar bone and jaw are both broken, sir."

"Very well."

The bo's'n took the apprentice's place as he stepped aside.

"Yes, sir; she's takin' water for'd," he reported. "Both peak tanks, Every time she comes down she cracks her seams wider!"

The captain glanced back complainingly over his shoulder at the *Guerry* plunging along astern. "It's that tow-line. It's too short, MacBride. It's handing us stiff jerks every time the *Guerry* climbs a wave. The sag would take up a lot of that if it was just a little longer. You can't veer out any more, can you, bo's'n?"

"Only had two hundred fathoms, and every foot of that's out, sir! If we had some four-inch stuff we could piece her out, but we ain't."

"Four-inch stuff? Say, signalman! Tell the *Guerry* to bend all the four-inch line she's got on to our cable. Tell her to lengthen it!"

The captain dived for the chart board again, and the signalman had to touch his arm to get his attention, two minutes later, when he came with the answer.

"*Guerry's* getting out her four-inch line, sir, and wants us to stop so she can bend it on to the cable! She also reports her starboard engine working again, sir!"

"What's that? Oh, yes. Stop both engines, messenger! Starboard engine working again, huh? Fine! That'll give us five knots more, now. And five knots is all we need! We were making too much leeway before, but now we ought to beat the wind and current around the Ledge Light easy, provided the bow holds out!"

The bow, it appeared, was going to hold out. The added five knots of the *Guerry*, plus the extra length of tow-line, eased the strain on the *Nelson* considerably, allowing her to have her head more; and the bo's'n presently brought the cheering news that she was taking less water forward.

It made everybody feel better. Even when the baleful Window-Ledge Light croppped up out of the sea over on the port beam no one was particularly nervous. The *Nelson's* skipper, with the natural instincts of a seaman, proceeded to sight it carefully across the pelorus and to estimate its distance, plotting it off on the chart; but he was humming to himself all the time that he did it.

"We'll make it!" he announced triumphantly, laying the dividers aside, "by a thousand yards! A thousand yards, you blankety old Sea Hermit!" And he shook his fist defiantly at the squat little lighthouse, crouching knee-deep in the storm-retched Atlantic.

It was a foolish thing to do, this making light of the gods. Even good-natured old Neptune must preserve his dignity on Olympus; so even while he laughed at this puny mortal antagonist he set about the chastening. And the signalman, although he knew it not, was this time the messenger of the gods.

"*Guerry* says, sir, her engine's broken down again! Can't repair it under four hours!" And immediately following his words, the father of all rollers struck full upon the *Nelson's* weakened bow with a sickening, sonorous crash.

The *Nelson's* skipper made no acknowledgment that he had heard the message. He only looked curiously at his still clenched fist; then he slowly raised it and with the back of it wiped the spray

dampness from his forehead. Without a word he turned to the chart board again and picked up his dividers. Slowly and carefully he remeasured his distances and remade his little crosses. This time it was not spray-damp that he wiped from his brow.

"Messenger!" he called sharply. "Tell Mr. Bradley that he'll have to make more speed."

Five minutes later he had Mr. Bradley's answer. The safety valves had already been reset twenty pounds higher. The *Nelson* could not make even the tenth of a knot more; and if she blew up a boiler she would make considerably less.

At the answer the captain groaned. "We'll never make it, MacBride. That wind and current will set us across the ledge before we get to the point unless we can make those four knots more."

MacBride was silent.

They were not the only ones who knew the two boats were not going to make the point. The group on the *Guerry's* battered bridge had noticed, too, that slow, ominous creep of the squat lighthouse — forward — forward — always forward along their port beam. It was now more than a whole point further forward than when they had first picked it up. When it crossed their bow they would be over the ledge itself. And with only one ship's engines to pull two boats, they knew it was only a matter of time. Even with the *Nelson* hanging on to the end it would be finished within the hour. But the *Nelson*, by herself, could still break through the girdling waves.

The skipper of the *Guerry* called all hands from below, and they came, dirty and reeling, out toward the brine-laden air.

Two minutes later the signalman of the *Nelson* was bearing a curious message to his commanding officer. It was so curious that he was more than half afraid he had received it wrong.

"The *Guerry* says to cut the tow-line and let her go," he reported. "She say's she'll try to anchor for the night."

"Anchor?" repeated the commanding officer. "Hell! He knows there isn't a cable made that'll hold him ten minutes even! Tell him 'No!' We'll hang on for a while longer, anyway."

The *Nelson* hung on. And the signalman brought another message.

"The captain of the *Guerry* orders you to let go!" he announced this time. The captain of the *Guerry* was senior to the *Nelson's* skipper by exactly two numbers on the navy list.

"Tell him to go to hell!" snapped the *Nelson's* skipper angrily, as he tried to make a thousand yards look like a mile on the chart. He really didn't mean for the signalman to send it exactly as he said it, but the signalman went and did so. And then shortly afterward he came back to his commander for the third time:

"Another signal from the *Guerry*, sir. She says 'Please let go!'"

The captain of the *Nelson* continued to work at his dividers, and said nothing. So this time the signalman sent back no answer at all.

Whereupon the crew of the *Guerry*, having done all they could in that direction, determined, as white men and sailors, to take things into their own hands. They immediately set about the matter, and their action was soon being reported to the *Nelson's* skipper.

"They're trying to get out on their fok's'le to cast loose, themselves," remarked the bo's'n serenely to his superior. "Needn't worry, sir; they'll never manage it."

"Not as long as we keep her head up for her," agreed the skipper. "The waves'll keep her fok's'le cleared, all right. Messenger! Go down and tell Ensign Anderson to report on the bridge!"

The messenger sped, returned and reported. "He's so sick he can hardly

walk, but he says, sir—here he comes now, sir!" And Ensign Anderson climbed on to the bridge, grabbed for a handhold on the rail, and groaned.

The *Nelson's* skipper gazed searchingly the ensign's greenish face and clenched jaws. "Anderson, I've got to go below, to the chart room and you'll have to take the bridge while I'm gone. Keep her to course eight—five. And don't pay any attention to signals from the *Guerry!*"

"Course eight—five, sir. Aye, aye, sir," said the ensign, and then groaned again. And he stumbled over to the wheel and stayed there until the skipper returned. There was a solemn look on the skipper's face.

"Anderson," he asked, "how's your nerve?"

In answer, the ensign turned upon him a face distorted but indignant.

"I'm not scared, sir! I'm just—a little —sick!" And to prove it he tried to grin.

The skipper regarded him for a moment; then he turned and walked over to where the bo's'n stood looking nonchalantly toward the lighthouse.

"MacBride," he asked, "are you a married man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, so am I. And, MacBride—what would your wife say if she knew you'd gone off and left a fellow out here by himself, to drown?"

MacBride pondered the question. "She'd tell me to come right on back out here and drown myself alongside him," he answered finally.

"So would mine, MacBride. I'm glad to find yours is that way, too, though. Call all hands, MacBride!" He turned to the helmsman. "Left rudder! Course one—five!" he ordered sharply.

"Course one—five?" repeated the ensign questioningly; "that'll take us inside the light, sir." Even the ensign knew that no vessel, not even a fishboat, had ever been across the ledge inside the light, even in fair weather.

"I know it," acknowledged the skipper. "And I know the chart says there's only twelve feet of water across there; and we draw fifteen! But I'm going to give her a try, anyway."

The skipper paused to watch the lubber's line move slowly around the compass card and stop at fifteen. "It's high tide, almost. And I believe that the wind, working on all this water, has backed it up in this bight of the coast between Coroner's Reef and the ledge. That may raise the mean height several feet."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the ensign steadily, and clenched his teeth against a new paroxysm of pain. "No vessel—not even a fishboat—has ever—" There was another cruel roll, and he groaned again.

The assistant lightkeeper, who had been standing on the lighthouse veranda watching the two boats for some minutes, suddenly rubbed his eyes and looked again. Then he ran inside and got the head keeper and the head keeper's family, and brought them out on the veranda, too. The lightkeeper was not overly inclined to come, because he thought the assistant was playing a joke on him, telling him that two destroyers were heading directly across the Window-Ledge. No vessel, not even a fishboat, had ever been across the Ledge, even in fair weather! So the assistant had to point out, very carefully, the two long, lean objects, strung one behind the other, staggering through the inshore combers.

And the head lightkeeper being, from long solitude and other things, somewhat of a religious man, said a little prayer beneath his breath.

OUTSIDE of Bentry Cove, beyond the entrance, the huge storm rollers still raced and thundered, lashing and grinding at the rocky portals. But inside, the water was almost calm, only ruffled occasionally as some stray gust managed to sneak past the lofty ridges that presented a rocky barrier against the

wild elements beyond. And over on the beach, secure in the strength of that barrier, the evening lights of Bentryport were just beginning to wake and wink through the gathering darkness.

Into the cove, like two wounded birds seeking a haven of refuge, crept two battered torpedo-boats. They were linked together by a long tow-line, whose greater part was lost beneath the surface. Both were listed, and both were down by the head.

As the leading destroyer stopped, then backed her engines, the distance between the boats shortened and the tow-line sagged further into the depths. The two boats finally lay motionless, a hundred yards apart.

Through the dusk called a deep voice: "All ready to let go, *Guerry?*"

And then the answer: "All ready, *Nelson!*"

"Let go, then! We'll haul in as fast as she comes."

A moment's silence, and then—"All gone, *Nelson.*"

On the *Nelson's* fok's'le a weary crew hauled in fathom after fathom of dripping wire, and after that, an endless section of soggy four-inch Manila.

Another moment's silence.

"I say, *Nelson*—much obliged for towing us in. We couldn't have made it by ourselves."

The answer that went back was startling:

"Hell! We weren't towing your old kettle in! We were just hauling in our four-inch Manila, and you got tied up to the end of it, somehow. But it's all back aboard now, thank you, every inch of it!"

And then the skipper of the *Nelson* paused and listened happily while the evening was rent with a streak of profanity.

"You—you—blankety-blank thieves! You—blinkety-blink burglars! You—you robbers!"

The rest was drowned out in the sudden clatter of leaping cable chain as the *Nelson's* anchor plunged bottomward.

Restaurant men plan lower prices.—*Headline.*

The best-laid plans of mice and restaurant men leave the eating public in an attitude of watchful waiting.—*New York Evening Sun.*

And with the white collar, as with other things, it isn't the original cost, it's the upkeep.—*Indianapolis News.*

MATCHES

By CHESLA C. SHERLOCK

Entered in the BLACK CAT *Prize Story Contest*

WAY up in Manitoba, on the Mantagao, thirty-three miles from steel, sat Matilda Kloke, before a roaring cabin fire, sobbing.

In her hand she held the burnt and charred remains of a match box which she had just rescued from the fire, after making heroic efforts to save the valuable contents. She had been beaten. The hungry flames had licked up the matches, withered them with their scorching heat, before she could move.

It had been careless of her, so careless! What would they do now? What would Herbert say? She dabbed at her eyes with the cuff of her sleeve, and regarded the bit of box in her hand. With a shrug of her shoulders, she tossed it into the flames.

Herbert ought to be coming now any minute. She got up and went to the little window and looked out to the south.

Low-flung, leaden clouds were racing overhead. The tall, silent somber forest stretched away in never-ending procession. And the snow! Already waist-deep, it laid a heavy hand on the forest and the open places. The wind had whipped up and was gliding through the pines and the spruce with that sharp, decisive, cutting screech of deviltry which only the wind in the North knows.

She shuddered and went back to the fire. She threw a couple of chunks into the yawning flames. If the fire should go out now—

"It's going to be a bad storm," she mused, aloud. "To-morrow it will be snow, snow, snow—just what it's been for weeks!"

She sat down on the rude seat again, and resting her chin on her hand, gazed moodily into the mocking, cackling flames. She thought again of Herbert. A smile dawned on her lips. The puckering of her forehead slowly vanished.

"I shouldn't feel so blue," she murmured, loyally. "It's done wonders for him. If it helps him so much, I ought to sing and be cheerful. What if the matches are gone? We can keep the fire going until after the storm."

She jumped quickly to her feet and commenced to hum a tune.

Half an hour later, just as the twilight was slipping into the impenetrable gloom of the night, Kloke pushed open the cabin door. He paused a moment to shake the snow from his shoes, then he hung them on a peg at the side of the door and went to the fire, with outstretched, mittened hands.

"Same old story, Tilly," he said, affecting cheerfulness. "Guess I'll never learn this trapping game. Got one mink, though. That made me feel pretty good; but the rest—every trap sprung and the bait gone!"

He took off his mittens and rubbed his red fingers briskly.

"Big storm coming up. How's the wood holding out?"

The woman paused, in her work at the table, and hesitated so long that Kloke demanded quickly:

"What's the matter, Matilda? Has something happened?"

She went and sat down, nodding her head briskly to keep back the tears, but failing completely.

Kloke was on his knees at her side instantly, trying to comfort her.

"Come, come, dear; tell me. What is it?" He glanced quickly around the little room. A gleam of understanding came into his slender, pinched face. "Are—are you homesick, lonely? Is the silence of this place getting you? I shouldn't wonder!"

"No, Herbert, not that! I'm so glad to be here with you and to see you getting stronger. The open, the rough life, the keen air seem to be making you so much better. I'm happy every minute. It isn't that, dear. I could live with you, even here, forever!"

The man sighed, happily, and drew her down to him.

"You brick!" he shouted. "You're loyal to the core, Tilly!"

She pushed him back, gently.

"It's something, something dreadful, Herbert. I was dusting things a bit today. You remember that mouse, mussed things up so, gnawing paper and the like? Well, I took the match box to the fire to dust it off, and I dropped it—in the fire."

Kloke started, in spite of himself, his face going as pale as the white coverlets on the bunks.

"Did you—save—any of them?" he blurted.

Slowly, she shook her head. "Not a single one, Herbert."

He got up, and gazed silently into the fire for a long time.

"We *must* have matches," he mused aloud. "If the fire should go out with the storm coming on— We may be tied up for the better part of a week. If I hadn't lost my pocket safe Monday, we could make out without so much danger."

Matilda silently went to work with the supper.

"Isn't it strange," she asked, at length, "how a single match can mean life or death to some people?"

Kloke smiled, weakly.

"I used to think that only smokers worried about the last match," he joked. "Oh, well! There's no use crying over spilt milk. We can make out, if we're careful. I'll get in a supply of wood from the lean-to while you're finishing supper. We'll have to keep that fire fed. After supper, we'll plan the thing out."

He put on his cap and mittens and went out to the lean-to, where he had stored a large quantity of wood. When Matilda announced that the meal was ready, he had stacked a huge pile at the side of the fireplace.

After supper, they sat and gazed at each other, silently.

"In the morning I am going to the store," he said, quietly.

"But, Herbert, the storm!"

"I've taken that into consideration. The Mantagao is frozen tighter than a drum. I'll go right down the river, on the shoes. It's shorter that way, and I can't get lost, no matter how hard the storm blows. Once there, I'll get a dog team to bring me back. I ought to make it in three days; two going, one back. I'll spend the first night with Sandy Ehlers. I'd rather run the risk of the storm, for you'll be safer here then. Nobody will bother you, for no one will be out in it. All you'll have to do will be to keep that fire going till I get back. Remember, *keep it burning*, or you'll freeze!"

He patted her hand, reassuringly.

"Come, get out the checker-board and let's forget all about it. I'm going to beat you to-night, see if I don't!"

They played later than usual. At ten-thirty, just as they were finishing the last game, a voice floated up to them on the wind. They sat in startled silence. It came again, a little nearer, loud, brusk, commanding.

Kloke clutched her hand. "God!" he muttered, "someone that wants to stay for the night!" He got up and took down the automatic from the shelf and

slipped it into his pocket. "Not a word," he cautioned, "about the fire."

He opened the door and looked out. A blinding storm was driving all before it. A gust of wind swept a hurricane of snow into the cabin, the chilling blast penetrating the farthest corner of the room.

Out of the driving wall of white and blackness, came a figure, a huge, gigantic, misshapen figure that towered like Council Knob above Kloke. It lurched into the cabin and Kloke slammed the door against the icy fingers of the night.

The man stumbled over to the fire and sat down, panting.

He absorbed the gracious warmth without speaking or even looking at them. When the chill commenced to leave his bones, he reached down, loosened the shoes that still clung to his feet, got up and commenced to get out of his harness of wool and fur.

He was a huge man, a man never to be forgotten. His shoulders were curved and stooped, yet wide and of great depth. His face was covered with a straggling beard, now dripping from melting frost and perspiration. A series of scars and gashes ran aimlessly across his cheek. One large, livid gash started at the corner of the eye and ended at the corner of his mouth. His eyes were deep-set, black, burning.

With a grunt, he tossed off his fur coat and turned around. His eye took in the woman first. A smile, half mocking, half genuine, crossed his grotesque features.

"McGee's m' name, Spike McGee; on m' way to Rapid City. Glad you happened to be here; mighty lucky! Last time, the old cabin was empty."

Kloke exchanged greetings, and the two men sat down, eyeing each other, covertly.

"You're welcome to what we have, Mr. McGee."

The man snorted.

"Spike McGee!" he snarled, a scowl crossing his face. "No man ever calls me 'mister'!"

Kloke hastened to correct himself.

"Spike McKee.... We haven't much, but you're welcome to stay *to-night.*"

McGee started slightly.

"Mebbe, stranger, mebbe not! Depends on the storm. I may stay another night, seein' as how you don't mind!" There was a trace of a sneer in his tone.

Kloke was plainly worried, although he maintained most of his innocent poise. It was evident that he had a bad customer on his hands.

Matilda soon solved the problem of the bunks. One bunk, in the corner of the room, was partitioned off by means of a couple of blankets fastened to ropes hung from ceiling and walls. That was her own. The men were to occupy the other two in the opposite corner.

McGee, by careful maneuvering, was persuaded to take the upper bunk so that Kloke might watch the fire.

During the night, Kloke was up several times to feed the never-ceasing hunger of the flames. And each time, as he returned to the bunk, he fancied that the black eyes of the stranger were following his every action.

The day dawned at last. As if out of sheer deviltry, the storm increased its fury until it lashed the forlorn cabin with a very hurricane of wind and snow and cold.

Kloke rubbed a tiny hole in the frost-covered pane and gazed out, doubt and worry assailing his soul. As he turned to his fire again, McGee leaped out of bed, and stretched his great hulk, lazily.

Then, he went and peered out. He seemed to be infinitely pleased at what he saw.

"Too bad, stranger," he grinned. "But m' bones tell me to stay in to-day! Too bad to outstay m' welcome!" He laughed.

"Im sure you're welcome—Spike McGee."

McGee snorted. "People generally don't consider me welcome anywhere."

He dropped into the seat before the fire and pulled on his high-tops.

"Say," he demanded, suspiciously, "why're you so damned careful 'bout that fire?"

Kloke went pale, and turned away.

"Out o' matches?" pressed McGee.

Kloke did not answer.

"Thought so, thought so," mumbled McGee, lacing his boots. After a painful silence, he chuckled, wickedly. "Divil of a pickle, eh, stranger?"

Kloke took down his rifle and commenced to polish the barrel.

"Sometimes," he answered quietly.

McGee ate his breakfast in great gulps, eyeing Matilda closely, and not without evident appreciation of her charms. But he said nothing to her. McGee's idea of womankind was—

He was essentially a ruffian of the North. He was hated and feared from the Yukon to the very doors of Winnipeg. His name was a synonym of all that was loathsome to the men of that great country.

In a fight, early in his nefarious career, he had been badly mauled by one his superior in every particular. Rumor had it that McGee had been caught robbing the traps of another. That gentleman, setting upon him, had unceremoniously planted the hobnails of his great boots into the physiognomy of McGee, with the remark: "I allus puts my *heel* down on rattlesnakes. After that they generally ain't worth much!"

And so McGee had become "Spike" McGee. The name had clung to him. It had followed him throughout the years and the far reaches of the North. And McGee had come, in his thirst for revenge, to take a savage delight in it. More than one man, weaker than himself, who had not dared speak it in his presence, out of fear of the consequences, had been compelled by him to do it.

Three years McGee had spent in the fastness to the north and west of Hudson Bay. Loneliness, the desire for society, of company that he could maul and drive and toy with, had at last overcome his well-deserved desire for solitude. It had driven him southward, just as the savage, unrelenting winds drove the storm clouds in the same direction. And the desires of his heart were none the less unrelenting than the dark and foreboding savageness of the lowering storm.

During the day, they played cards and idled away the time as best they could. The strained attitude between the man and woman and the unwelcome stranger made the time drag with unusual heaviness.

When the wood supply had run low, Kloke had taken to sending Matilda after it, because he would not leave McGee in the cabin with her alone; and there was no way to persuade McGee to step outside the door. He was just as adroit as they were.

That night the fire went out. The circumstances were unusual to say the least. Kloke was sure that not more than fifteen minutes had passed since he had just tended the fire, when he awoke with a start and stared, wondering, into the gloom of the room. He fancied that he heard a chuckle in the bunk above him.

He sprang out, and seizing a candle, thrust it into the still warm ashes, vainly hoping that a live coal might still be found. But the fire was dead, lifeless. There were traces of moisture. . . .

Stunned, he crept back in bed.

In an hour dawn came, merciful, peaceful, hushed. The storm had spent its fury and the world was silent and still, sleeping after its travail.

Kloke got up and apprised Matilda of their plight. She met his worried, haggard face cheerfully.

"Maybe he will give us some matches," she ventured, hopefully.

Kloke shook his head. "I'm afraid not," he whispered. "He has some sinister purpose. Remember, dear, you must do just exactly as I tell you to-day. Take

every hint! We are in for trouble, I fear."

McGee innocently climbed out of bed and stared at the dead fireplace.

"Judas! Fire out?" he mocked.

Kloke nodded. McGee strove to hide his feelings, but did not succeed.

"Got a match?" Kloke asked, with as much unconcern as he could muster.

McGee did not answer. He commenced to fill his pipe—insolently it seemed to Kloke. Then he produced a match, lighted it and instantly blew it out as Kloke attempted to grab it from him.

"See here, you shrimp!" he snarled. "What do you mean, tryin' to grab m' match?"

Kloke met his burning gaze steadily. "That match means life or death to us. I thought I might use it after you had. We took you in out of the storm, gave you of our hospitality. Naturally, I expected you to return it."

McGee snarled under his breath and slouched into the chair at the table.

"We might as well come to tacks," he commenced. "You—"

Matilda had just come from behind her blankets. She was pale, but composed. In spite of her fear, she was good to behold. McGee paused and feasted his eyes upon her.

Kloke caught the significance of it.

"Matilda," he said evenly, "will you go out into the lean-to while we—come to tacks, as Mr. McGee says."

With fear in her eyes, she started to obey, reaching for her mackinaw. Kloke checked her.

"Put on mine. It's warmer."

She did, and as she slipped her nervous fingers into the pocket and they closed over his automatic, she gave him an understanding look.

"Now, then, what do you want?" he demanded of McGee, hoarsely.

McGee had commenced to finger the deck of cards. He smiled with diabolical contortions of his spiked face, as his scheme took shape in his seared mind.

"Frien'," he commenced, between huge puffs at his pipe, "I come all the way from the tip of ol' Hudson Bay for just one thing. Woman! Men hate Spike McGee like poison; I generally make 'em hate me, by God! Women never care for Spike McGee, neither, but I make 'em, by Judas! Three year I ain't seen man or woman, till I see you and *her!* An' I says to myself, why go further, Spike McGee, why go further?"

"You need matches, frien'; I have 'em." He produced a pocket safe crammed full. "Mebbe you can have these, maybe not!"

He chuckled fiercely, a throaty, gurgling snarl. He leaned back and fell into a song; a wild, lewd thing that men used to sing in the dance halls of the unregenerate frontier.

Kloke gasped, trembled, shuddered. He put his hand quickly into his pocket, then remembered that he had purposely surrendered the little gun to Matilda. He rested his eye on the rifle, leaning against the wall near the door. He slowly moved in that direction.

"Sit down!" snapped McGee, suddenly breaking off in the middle of his song. "Frien', we'll leave that gun out o' this!"

Kloke sat down, the cold sweat breaking out all over him.

McGee commenced absently to deal a solitaire hand.

"You take the matches, frien', and go out and set your traps to-day. Spike McGee'll stay and keep your woman company. When you return along about dark, Spike McGee will be gone. You have your wife an' the matches. Sabe?"

Hot passion leaped into Kloke's face. His muscles quivered and strained. His eyes gleamed with the poison hatred of the male at bay, fighting in defense of his hearthstone.

"You beast!" he shouted. "Get out of here! Take your matches and get out! We'll freeze before we'll listen to your damnable bargaining."

He jumped from his chair and shook his fist in the hairy, scarred features of the other.

McGee sat and coolly stared at him.

"Sit down!" he bellowed again. "I can break you in two with m' hands, you little squirt! You listen to me or I'll do it and *take what I want for keeps*, after I finish you!"

His manner changed as suddenly again. Once more he purred on, as he attempted to smile.

"No one can ever say that Spike McGee didn't give 'em a run for their money! We'll cut for it. High card wins. If I lose, you get the matches, and I move on to Rapid City for my social company; you lose, you take the matches and tend them traps of your'n as you ought to be doin' now, seein' as how th' animals is pretty hungry this mornin'."

He shuffled, cut; shuffled, and laid the pack down on the table. Then he reached out a steady, hairy hand and deftly cut a queen. His eyes lighted up, and he leaned back and fell to singing again.

Kloke sat and stared at the cards before him. The upturned queen seemed to be dancing a jig before his fevered eyes. He shuddered and drew back.

"Cut!" snapped McGee. "Hurry up!"

The green fire of the beast had come into his glinting eyes. His scars stood out livid and throbbing.

Kloke collected himself, steadied his hand. He reached out to do the bidding of the stronger man. McGee lapsed into song and laughter again.

Noiselessly, the door opened and Matilda entered. The rush of cold air brought McGee to his feet. He whirled with a snarl and leaped for her.

He looked straight into the barrel of the wicked automatic. It was held in a firm, steady hand. It seemed to yearn for action.

"We are sorry you are leaving, Mr. Spike McGee!" she said, evenly, her eyes flashing. "And don't forget to take your matches with you!"

She produced a pocket safe and passed it to Kloke.

"I found your matches, Herbert," she said, sweetly. "You had dropped them in the woodpile. Let's have a fire; I'm nearly frozen."

DAMOUR BLOOD

By HELEN TOPPING MILLER

Entered in the BLACK CAT *Prize Story Contest*

HEN the miles—which had been reckoned first by thousands and then by hundreds and fifties—began to be told in multiples of five, Sergeant Damour straightened up in his seat and by a supreme effort stopped thinking.

All the way across—fourteen days of August sea and August sky, fourteen witch nights of cooled gold and sapphire and a sea as empty as a scoured bowl—Damour had been grinding one thought in his brain with the rasp and creak of a busy little mill. It had come to him one night far out in the silence of the Argonne—this disturbing thought.

Damour fixed his eyes sternly upon the flying landscape of which every tree and lane and bit of water were as familiar as the face of an old friend, and fixed a grimmer, savage inner eye upon the craven thought which tormented him.

"Look here, fellow," he told himself very bluntly, "you're glad to get home—you hear me—glad! Glad!"

The grinding stopped. There was an ache where the heat of it had been and a strange hollowness such as one feels in the air when a bell has ceased tolling, but otherwise there was peace for the first time in many days in the soul of Damour. He leaned back and looked out of the window.

Funny about things—the way they stayed the same while the people who lived with them and loved them changed. There was the same old cattail growing at the end of the wooden bridge on the Essex road. As a little boy, riding through the country in his father's old phaeton with the black bag full of a jumble of pills and cotton and forceps and iodine under his feet, he had coveted the brown, woolly magnificence of that cattail.

And now, when he was twenty-four years old and the flare of war had scorched him, leaving him a bit burnt and bitter, when he had a wound stripe and a faded sergeant's chevron and little else of consequence, here was the same old cattail rearing its furry head proudly under the shadow of the same old mossy post.

And roads—he knew them every inch! Roads he had traveled with his father! They had seen everything then—quail's nests and mushrooms hidden under mandrake leaves, bitter-sweet berries in autumn, rabbit tracks in winter. Damour's heart swelled with a burning pain.

Dad would not be there. The old white horse would not be hitched to the leaning post beside the freight shed.

She—his mother—would have a car there, perhaps. He recalled that in some of the letters which had sifted into France she had said something about a car being a social necessity and something about the insurance company having paid finally the full amount of his father's policy. There had been some argument because of the finding of the empty bottle. But, of course, everybody knew his father—knew that he would not intentionally take an overdose of anything!

Damour did not remember all of it, because it was about this time that the grinding had begun in his brain. And now, whenever he thought about it, he could feel the little millstones revolve.

He turned the current of his thought abruptly.

Houses, for instance—little white houses with wistaria, like purple smoke over the door, with fig trees in the yard —and a girl!

He wondered if his mother had changed the place? Probably she had. He recalled hearing her apologize to some New York people because the house needed painting. It had always needed painting. But there was something fine and dignified about it, something simple and homely and good to live with which was like his father.

He would hate to see the old place changed. Home would not be home without the faded old brown sheepskin at the foot of the stairs or the dusty bust of Escalapius over the study door.

They were getting in now. Everything looked the same. Somehow he could not get used to the fact that everything was the same, when home was so changed, when dad was gone!

There was the street. You could not see the place because of the trees. Had she altered the house—built on an alien porch, cut down the trees where the crows came in winter?

Same old wooden station. Same old bus. Same old horse, even!

There she was—his mother—in purple, tall, imposing, handsome as ever!

He looked again. He started to wave. Then he drew back. He turned away for an instant, feeling a trifle old and a bit weary and sick. The grinding in his brain began again.

She had dyed her hair!

The soft gray that had fluffed about her ears, giving her rather proud face a gentler look, was a hard henna-brown. Damour did not call it henna, because he did not know the name of the hard, bright hue. He only stared and was faintly puzzled and a bit angry. Somehow, he gathered up his baggage and stumbled off the train.

His mother greeted him, sweetly and effusively. He caught the look she gave his faded khaki, a mildly deprecating look, flavored with an indulgent smile.

There was a man with her, a Senator Harris, whom Damour remembered from her letters. Harris was an old man trying to be young, in a jaunty summer suit and horn-rimmed glasses. He shook hands cordially, and Damour tried to unbend. But, somehow, he could not do it. There was a hard, hot pain raging within him. He felt stiff and hostile. And yet this was home.

He threw his bags into the car. There was a car, small but very smart. The Senator drove. Damour resented the proprietary way with which he took the wheel. He resented everything about the man.

"Swanked up like a second lieutenant," he indulged his spirit in sullen inward mutterings.

They were crowded on the single seat. His mother did most of the talking.

"So unfortunate that Whitlock did not receive his commission," she chattered; "every one was so incensed at the ruling of the war department—so unfair to the boys who had tried so hard!"

Damour felt the muscles of his neck stiffen. "I didn't want any commission," he declared bluntly. "I enlisted as a private. Somebody has to do the fighting in a war, you know!"

"You got this, I see," the senator indicated the faded wound stripe.

"I got that in the Argonne." Damour liked the senator better, he discovered. "It's all the decoration I want."

"Whit is so modest," his mother explained sweetly. "His father could have gotten him a commission easily; he had considerable influence. But Whit was so democratic."

"So was father," declared Damour. "You see, senator, we're old French fighting stock—we Damours. We're proud and we're simple. Over in the Department Deux Sevres they haven't forgotten yet what my great uncles did in seventy,

and yet I found a Damour living in a little stone house in Echoine, living in the midst of a cabbage patch, wearing a plain smock like a peasant. And that Damour had written two books of philosophy which are used in all the French universities."

"Your father wrote a book, I remember." This senator was not a bad chap, after all.

"A treatise on diseases of the bones," the boy explained. "They're using it yet!"

"Oh, so dry!" gurgled his mother. "I helped correct the proofs. But I was not much good. I could not tell whether the words were spelled correctly or not. Whit, dear, here we are at home! Doesn't it look beautiful to a homesick soldier?"

She had changed the place!

Or rather, one might say that she had made it into some other place, utterly foreign, utterly unlike home. The garden and the trees were gone. In their place was a formal lawn, with stiff little evergreens and a white pergola. The old rock wall, where of old the chipmunks had eluded him, was gone. No use, he thought, to seek for Escalapius or the old sheepskin!

"It—it looks fine," he gulped, as he climbed the steps. "It must have cost a lot!"

His mother laughed. A laugh with an edge which was for him alone. Instantly he knew that he had blundered. That was another subject which was a sore point of contact between this mother who somehow had always persisted in remaining outside his life and himself.

"Same old room?" he inquired with an effort at lightness.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed; "not that one, Whit—the next, back!" She followed him up the stairs, all newly brilliant with white enamel—the same stairs upon which he remembered sprawling in wailing imagination when his father had gone out on night trips and he was not allowed to go. "I had to have so many guest rooms, you see. In here, son. See, here are all your things. Here's the same old bird's nest that you brought home when you were ten."

Damour gulped. His throat hurt. Why didn't she go out and let him alone? All that downstairs was like some other place. But this—this was home. It hurt. God, how it hurt! He could see fingers cutting away that gray twig where the flicker's nest poised, cutting so skillfully, beloved old fingers, blunt and square and strong, the sort of fingers to which God trusts the healing of the wounds of his world. Why didn't she go away and leave him alone with this grief which was like something bursting within him. Couldn't she see that he couldn't stand it much longer?

"Aren't you going to kiss me, Whit?" she asked. "I'm still your mother, you know!"

He kissed her dutifully. It softened him a little and he kissed her again because he wanted to.

"Some time when you feel like it," he said hoarsely, "I wish you'd tell me—about him!"

"Oh, not to-day, Whit," she backed away. "It upsets me. He was so proud of you—and it was so sudden, so ghastly. There was no time to send—no time for anything!"

"I see." He slid out of his coat and threw it on the bed—the same old bed.

"Whit," she said, "I'm having some people in to-night, just a few for dinner and some young people to dance afterwards. Do n't you—had n't you better dress?"

He nodded. "I'll take a bath and shave," he agreed dully.

Somewhere, on some night in the midst of the heat and shock of that awful summer he had dreamed of coming home, of sitting on the old bench under the lilacs with her, her soft gray hair shimmering in the dusk—sitting hand-in-hand and talking about *him!* That was after

the letter came, and before his madding mill had begun its grinding. "I haven't any other uniform," he told her, "except a winter one. It needs pressing. And it's worn worse than this!"

"Preston Simms has a beauty," remarked his mother in the same voice with which she had goaded him as a boy by dilating upon the perfect manners and clean fingernails of Preston Simms.

"Preston Simms gets a captain's pay," drawled Damour. "I would have liked a new one, but I had n't the money."

Her face hardened a trifle.

"Speaking of money, Whit," she began, closing the door of the room.

"Do n't speak of it," he said quickly. "What ever is left is yours. I'm going to get a job."

"There were so many debts," she went on nervously, "and, of course, the place was in ruinous condition. And you realize, Whit, that I must consider my future. I am not an old woman."

He brushed his hair monotonously, over and over. He wanted to love his mother. He had wanted it passionately as a lonely little lad, when from some grubby ambush he had watched her drive away in a carriage with some smart gentleman who somehow never seemed to have to work.

Always she had smiled at him and tossed him a kiss from very far off. But the smile was not what his small, desolate soul had desired. He had wanted to ride with her behind the docktailed horses. He had longed to be hugged in secret, to have his hair tousled and to be chased upstairs and pelted with pillows. He could not have told definitely just what it was that he had missed, but he did know that he had grown more furtive as he grew older, and stiff and defensive in her presence just as he felt now wielding the brush monotonously.

She was relentless. "Whit, dear," she kept on, "I know I am a foolish old woman, but I did want you to come home with boots and a Sam Browne belt."

"Yeah!" Damour, who had secretly bought a lieutenant's bar and kept it hidden for months in the bottom of his trunk, affected a scornful drawl. "Six or eight million other women all wanted their boys to come home in Sam Browne belts." He kissed her again, keeping his eyes below the line of her hair, and playfully pushed her out and locked the door.

Then, his face blackly moody, he pulled off his blouse and tossed it into a chair.

"Sam Browne belt!" he snorted wrathfully. "By George!" From the pocket of the blouse had slid a yellowed kodak picture. It was a picture of a girl sitting on a low limb of a fig tree. She was not a frilly girl. Her khaki blouse and skirt were built for service rather than beauty, and she wore sturdy, square-heeled shoes. But she looked out of the picture at Damour with a strong and exalted look. And on her sleeve was a band with two gold stars.

You could see a corner of the house in the picture, a little house with yellow lattices and wistaria, like purple smoke over the door. The house had stood a little way from the Georgia training-camp, and during the months that he had drilled there Damour had never ceased to wish that his father could see the house—that he could see the girl!

His mother would want him to marry somebody with money, of course.

He sat down heavily on the bed. No use to lie to himself any more. No use to dodge the things. For weeks since that sickly, hellish night on the Argonne he had known what stubborn truth the mill of his brain ground upon.

He had not wanted to come home.

He had not wanted to come home. And now he was at home and he hated it.

When men had sworn and wept with homesickness in the welter and heat of the trenches, Damour had lain on his elbow in the muck and laughed. The armistice had had no thrill for his apathetic spirit.

Peace had seemed a sentimental nuisance. The journey home was a mere prolonging of misery. The women, waving and teary along the way, were deluded and pitiful. They had thought him glad to get home. The whole, sentimental, clamorous country had visualized him as chafing and pining. There had been fire-eating speeches, he knew, and editorials and flags and arches of flowers. And he had hated the very thought of home.

It was funny. And it was a little weary. And it hurt with a bitter, grinding pain!

Home and his mother were all that he had in the world. He should love the two of them with a strong passion—and he did not!

He looked up at a stained, faded old picture which he knew had been banished from the library, an old-fashioned picture of a man in a frock coat and tall hat. He faced those painted eyes and saluted gravely.

"I'm here, Dad," he said. "She belonged to you. You loved her. You thought everything she did was right. I won't shirk on your job."

He shook out his winter uniform, a rumpled, rather smelly old suit.

A dance! In August! Olive drab, buttoned chokingly under his chin. Girls! His mother, rouged, dyed, haughty. Grind, grind, grind! Thank the Lord old Escalapius did not have to look down on it!

Within twenty-four hours, Damour had learned two things which added to the grinding unhappiness in his soul. One was that his mother had spent an alarming amount of money, so much that there was scarcely enough left to keep her in clothes for a year at her present rate of expenditure. And the other was that a returned soldier, even a returned wounded soldier, sheds his mantle of heroism when he starts out after a job in his home town.

Before the war, Damour had dallied through the university, working a little during the summer in the office of a local broker. There had been a faint underlying purpose in his life, but the purpose had been his father's, not his own. It had to do with the old case of instruments and the old black bag with "W. D." on the lock and the carrying on of the traditions of the American Damours, who were physicians and chemists, every one.

Damour, the son, had never opposed his father's plan. And yet even now, when the faded old portrait had become his shrine and the old black bag which he found in the attic was endowed with a sanctity which urged him to drag it out and dust it lovingly and grow melancholy over the ancient iodine and rubber smell of it, Damour felt the tension of the old warring against his father's decision.

He had not wanted to be a doctor. It was the soil that called to him always—the soil and the clean, exalting holiness of open sky above open country. He had felt it in France, when the old peasants trudged homeward with the sunset purple on their bent backs. But most of all, he had felt it in Georgia, where the girl with the steadfast eyes worked gladly beside an old negro servant, carrying on in the place of the two brothers who would never come back.

But now that was all over. There was no money for education, no money to buy the land he coveted. He could not be a doctor. He could not be anything. He had to get a job.

Men shook hands, slapped his shoulder, commended him oratorically and evaded any nearer approach. The old broker was dubiously negative. Business was shot to hell, he assured Damour. The boys in the trenches hadn't seen all the horrors of war by a lot!

It was three days before Damour came home and told his mother that he had a job—a "position," she called it. He did not tell her much about it, except that it was a traveling job, and that he would

not be gone long at a time. He did not tell her that the merchandise he had contracted to sell was a blatant, charlatan thing, utterly worthless, utterly hideous, combining the pictures of American generals with views of troops in action, the whole bordered with a hysterical mingling of allied flags!

He did not tell her that in selling this contraption he must trade on his uniform and his wound stripe and the patriotism of a rural population. He evaded her eyes.

"Whit," she said, "Senator Harris thinks he can get you something in Washington. He is very influential—and a number of prominent men are indebted to him for favors."

Damour flushed. "I don't want any help from him," he blurted. "I don't want any help from anybody."

She narrowed her eyes. "There's another consideration," she went on. "You probably do not realize that it costs a great deal to keep up this place—or have you forgotten that the house is yours?"

He had forgotten the old Damour entail. That was what some of the veiled things she had said about the house meant, then. That was what was at the bottom of some of the chilled silences between them. She was afraid he would evade some responsibility, shirk some obligation—he, a Damour!

"I shall keep up the place," he assured her with a flavor of youthful hauteur. "I shall take care of you as long as you live!"

"Thank you," she said. But there was a cold ring in her tone that puzzled her son for many days.

From his first trip into the country, Damour returned with such disgust, such utter sickened weariness as he had not known in eighteen months of foreign service. He had driven seventy miles behind a languid livery horse. He had encountered every human trait from sentimental pity to sneering scorn. And he had earned four dollars.

He handed the money to his mother with a smile—a tired, little-boy smile which should have softened her and did not.

"Whit," she motioned him into a chair, "how long are you going to keep up this folly?"

And because Damour knew that she was right, that the thing he was doing was foolish and futile and unworthy, he defended himself sulkily.

"I'm doing the best I can," he grumbled.

"An insignificant best," she declared mercilessly. "Don't you think you ought to make the best of yourself—when Senator Harris offers—for your father's sake?"

"Don't talk about my father!" he commanded hotly. "I know you are disappointed in me. You've always been disappointed in me ever since I can remember."

He swallowed the other bitter taunt which rankled upon his tongue. After all, she was his mother. He could not say to her, "You were always disappointed—in him! You made his life desolate by your lack of faith. You broke his spirit—long before he was old. I know. I had eyes to see—even if I was a kid!" He could not say things like that to her. After all, she was right. He was a failure, a sodden, uninteresting bulk of male flesh from which the spirit had been ground away. And he had to stay. He had to. In a few months she would be penniless.

He had to fend away the world. He had to keep her white hands beautiful, her soft body cherished. He had to stick on his father's job. And yet why did it appear that she was always maneuvering to get him away—to Washington—somewhere—anywhere? Or did he imagine it? He had become a sensitive fool since the Argonne.

There were more people to dance that night. Preston Simms was there in his silver bars and his Sam Browne belt,

The girls were there—very fragrant and silly. Probably she wanted him to marry one of them. But Damour was surly and would not dance. There was a homesick bird in the arbor outside that sang over and over a single aching measure. The boy sat moodily in the dark alone, and listened to it and thought of the mocking birds in Georgia, and that the figs would be ripe there, and the June bugs, fat jeweled robbers, would be tumbling drunkenly out of the trees with their ridiculous legs kicking.

He lay back on the grass and listened to the noisy music, despising the jigging bleat and bray of it. He thought about roads, far and white and luring—roads dim and venturing—roads which must never call to him again.

He thought about the old portrait upstairs and of the eyes, deep and brave and patient, and wondered if his father had ever known this urging itch of unrest, this mill that ground without mercy. They were a loyal race, the Damours.

His father would have spurned such a craven impulse. He was sure of that.

And yet, there was the bottle!

No one had ever told Damour the truth about the bottle. But he knew that there had been sufficient doubt to prolong the dispute about the insurance policy. And he knew that his father had suffered maddening pain at times from an inflamed fifth nerve. Even as a little boy he remembered anguished nights when footsteps paced an endless round upon the porch, remembered his father's eyes, hollowed and agonized. Experts, wiser in chemistry than the elder Damour, had been known to take overdoses of sedatives in frantic seeking after relief.

The nagging doubt, the hellish thing which had planted a poisonous spore in his young soul upon the far Argonne, grew suddenly rank and noisome. Had his father taken this easy way, this shadowed gateway into relief and peace? It was an intolerable thought, and Damour battled with it stubbornly. It was worse, in that it disintegrated the basic rock upon which he had planted his banner—his belief in his father. And it lured by its very insidiousness, by the audacious temptation which was at the core of it.

He rose up, every pore tingling with the fever of the fight that was in his soul, his body tense, his heart a leaden pain.

And then beside him in the arbor he heard a soft tread, the stir of a silken skirt, the tinkle of a laugh, the sound of ardent lips pressed upon a soft arm, the low, caressing whisper of Preston Simms. The sounds crashed him abruptly to earth, made him suddenly and inexplicably furious.

He leaped soundlessly away over the clipped grass, and hardly knowing where he went, he ran, blindly, breathlessly, plunging through shrubbery and the rasping ranks of corn, and under the blackness of orchards, until he felt a road beneath his feet—a hard, firm, pleasant road.

He ran on and on. He ran until his heart was like a fire in his body and his temples beat a roll of drums. He ran until he smelled dawn in the air, that same wet, druggy aromatic tang which had stung his nostrils at zero in the Argonne. Then he halted and a queer, childish feeling of bewilderment and loneliness came over him. He was on the Essex road. And just before him lay the wooden bridge with the brown cattail waving its woolly pennant at the end of it.

Obeying a sudden impulse, he jumped down into the oozing bog, and standing with the water seeping into his shoes, he slashed the cattail stalk very low down. But before he could extricate the tall stem from the tangle of the rushes it shattered into a rain of furry fragments, leaving the nude stalk in his hand.

Demour looked up quickly. Somehow he had expected to see eyes watching him, deep, kindly eyes, brave and patient. Somehow he had listened for a laugh, a

fatherly laugh, big and bluff and indulgent.

He tossed the foolish reed into a bog. And with it by some miracle of feeling he threw away the hideous doubt that had rent him. He cast away the grinding discontent, the nagging lure of far places.

He was a Damour. With set teeth he walked back along the Essex road. Pride walked with him, the pride of the Damours, the unsullied pride of the Damours. It was as if they marched beside him, along that ghostly road in the chill dawn, a steadfast, loyal race, who kept the pride of their blood.

The sun was high and hot when at last he turned in at the gate of the house. The colored lanterns still hung on the porch, but the place had a swept and restored air, and the smell of the freshly-cut grass was warm and pleasant. There was no one about. Very likely he had not been missed. He hoped no one would discover him until he had a chance to shave.

He was not exactly certain what he would do next. Whatever opportunity offered he would uphold the traditions of the Damours, who spoke the truth and were kind to women.

He started up the stairs. Then from the library he heard voices, his mother's voice and the deep, pleasant tones of the senator. They were talking about him. He moved nearer, halted by his name. Then he saw them. They were sitting on the old divan. The senator's arm lay across his mother's silken shoulder. Their heads were very close.

"But—my dear!" his mother was saying, "he is my son—my only son! His home is all that he has. How can I leave him—yet?"

Damour could not hear the man's words. But his mother's arguments were audible.

"We could live here," she suggested. "But—this house belongs to Whit. And the Damours are so proud. He wants to stay on—to take care of his mother. I shall have to stay—with him!"

Damour slipped back swiftly, for fear he should laugh aloud. Then he walked quickly into the library, smiling a little at the two who sprang up embarrassed.

"I'm leaving to-day," he told them. "I thought I'd tell you. I may not come back for a long time."

"But, Whit," even the surprise in his mother's voice could not keep out the shade of subtle relief, "where are you going?"

"I'm going back to Georgia." The harassed, furtive dullness was gone out of his face. In its place was a strong, proud look. "There's a girl down there. Her two brothers were killed in France. She's trying to run a farm alone. I think I'll go down—and marry her!"

He shook hands with the senator then. He had decided that the senator was a good fellow.

And he kissed his mother, warmly, sincerely. But he would have kissed her as warmly had she demanded that he live on with her and dance in tight olive drab forever. He had fought that all out in the bog on the Essex road. It was finished. He was a Damour, and the Damours were like that.

A bird was singing outside in the arbor—a homesick bird with an ache in his throat. Damour strode across the lawn, bareheaded, browned, glad in the sun.

"You're too far from home, fellow," he apostrophised the feathered mourner. "Come along and go back with me!"

America carries its craze for prohibition too far when it prohibits a world peace.—*London Opinion.*

THANKS TO THE CAPE COD FINN

By CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES

THE Cape Cod Finn was responsible for the strangest adventure that ever befell three of the best axemen in all the Abol River Valley.

He came to Abol the winter after Wally MacDougald had achieved immortal fame by winning the gold medal for playing jigs and reels in the grand competition of pipers at the Scotch picnic in Boston; but having spent fourteen years before the mast, and being fully imbued with the glories of the sea, he was inclined to shrug his shoulders scornfully when any one spoke of what a fine thing it was to have a job with a man like MacLaren, and every evening he told such tall stories of mariners and ships that Wally MacDougald and Farquhar Stevenson and Danny Logue became discontented with the camps and asked him if there were not more of a chance at sea to better themselves.

"It is a fine life, a fine life," the Finn declared. "A fine life for a likely lad." But his eyes twinkled. The Finn was a shameless humorist.

At first the talk of going to sea was a joke; soon the three were considering it seriously; in a week they had become so enthusiastic that they could think of nothing else, and in two weeks every man in camp was calling them "the three old salts."

The Finn, however, had had experience with the "glories" of which he spoke so glibly, and with his scorn for the inland life was mingled a certain involuntary content. As he ate MacLaren's good grub and figured up the wages that were due him he gazed at the smoky rafters and smiled a sad smile behind which danced an unhallowed mirth.

In the fullness of time, the drive swept down to the boom and the crews went forth on the rampage. From the Columbia Hotel to the Brewer Bridge one could not pass two lamp-posts that were not held up by MacLaren's men. Barney Osborn hocked his brad-boots and went to the Exchange Street Station to try to beat down the price of a round-trip ticket to Passadumkeag. Ole Hardenson wandered up on Main Street and bargained half his accumulated wages for a second-hand violin; everywhere there was a grand time in progress. But Wally MacDougald, Danny Logue and Farquhar Stevenson, having deserted the crowd and gone off by themselves, picked their way through the mud to the end of an Exchange Street alley and peeked round the corner of an old shed at a short, fat man with a sad, sour face, who was sitting in a rocking chair on the deck of a lumber-laden schooner.

"I do think he's the very man," whispered Danny Logue.

"Weel, then, have it over with," replied Wally, and stepped out from the corner of the shed, thereby, although no one knew it at the time, preparing the way for the future astonishment of the captain of the tugboat Push and Pull, himself a worthy and patriotic Scotchman, who, at that moment, was two hundred miles away and had never heard of any one of the three.

They crossed the dock and stepped from the blackened timber that overhung the dark water of the Kenduskeag, to the deck of the little schooner. The man

in the rocking chair raised his eyes and took his pipe from his mouth but said nothing.

"Captain Nelson of the Elmira Hawkes?" asked Wally boldly.

The fat man spat over the side and cleared his throat. "That's me," he said in a squeally voice.

Wally glanced up at the old gray post-office and the long brown wharves before continuing. "Hum, hum," he groaned, being somewhat embarrassed, then as neither Farquhar nor Danny said anything, he plunged boldly into the subject in hand. "Mr. Nelson, here's three handy lads as can handle an axe, run logs or drive hosses. We don't know nothin' 'bout ships an' such like, but we wants to go to sea a spell, seein' there ain't no crews goin' into the woods this time of year, an' we was especially recommended to you by a mutual friend of ourn. If you can give us a job, we'll work hard and serve you faithful."

Wally stopped and stared at Captain Nautical Nelson. On his face expanded a most peculiar expression that was intensified by a broad grin. There was a strange light in the man's small, closely-set eyes that seemed to be in imminent danger of running into each other, even as his black eyebrows ran into each other on the summit of his nose.

Captain Nautical Nelson gulped, knocked the ashes from his pipe into the stream and held out his hand. "Ye're fine, hearty lads," he cried. "The' ain't much to do jes' sailin' the Elmira Hawkes, an' I can't pay ye much, but I'll give ye your keep, an' say—" he paused and eyed them dubiously—"four dollars a month!"

"Not much!" Danny Logue muttered.

Nautical Nelson turned quickly and looked at Danny's broad shoulders. "Make it five!" he snapped.

"Not on your—"

"Sh," whispered Farquhar, "it's only a lark! Come the end of the month we'll all be back in Bangor and hire out with MacLaren."

"Well, perhaps—" Danny began.

"Where's your crew, Cap'n Nelson?" asked Wally suddenly.

The captain flushed and avoided the keen eyes that were turned upon him. "They er—they was took sick," he said in a low, sad voice, then as a new idea seemed to strike him he continued more briskly, "'twas the Bangor water—it's pizen."

Wally looked at the others. Farquhar grinned and Danny nodded. "All right," Wally cried. "We're with you, but for a month only."

Captain Nautical Nelson gripped Wally's outstretched hand and glanced apprehensively at the shore, but no one was in sight. "Come below, lads," he whispered hoarsely. "Come below and sign up. Oh, it's a fine v'y'ge we'll have—a fine v'y'ge!"

He limped clumsily off to the little deck house and climbed even more clumsily down the short ladder. In single file, Wally MacDougald, Farquhar Stevenson and Danny Logue followed him out of sight into the dark hole that was complimented by the name of cabin. The sadness and sourness had mysteriously disappeared from the face of Nautical Nelson.

When the three new sailors came back to the Riverside Hotel for their dunnage there were twenty men to meet them.

"Yes," Wally said, in reply to the loud questions that were thrown at him from all sides, "yes, we all got jobs—great luck—signed up with Cap'n Nelson of the Elmira Hawkes, just like the Cape Cod Finn told us. Nope, he hadn't any crew—they was took sick on account of Bangor water. So long, we've got to bustle. Cap'n Nelson didn't want us even to come ashore for our bags. So long!"

Until the triumvirate had turned the corner of Exchange Street not a man smiled, but when they had disappeared a thunder-burst of laughter shook the grim old hostelry. Men laughed till their sides ached and their heads dropped on their folded arms.

Out of the little hotel office reeled the Cape Cod Finn. "Thanks to me!" he gasped. "Thanks to me! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! I've seen 'em easy, I've seen 'em soft, but when it comes to your leetle green lobsters a-racin' fer the trap, give me a blue-nosed lumberjack sniffin' salt water!"

When the drawbridge at the mouth of the Kenduskeag stream slowly opened and a snorting little tug drew the Elmira Hawkes into the main river where a flood tide and a fair wind waited to waft her down to the sea, a hundred lumberjacks were seated along the sleepers of the railroad bridge and along the rotting piles that lined the riverbank, to wave farewell to Wally, and Danny, and Farquhar Stevenson.

"What," growled Danny, "are they laffin' at!"

Neither Wally nor Farquhar answered the question, but Captain Nautical Nelson hid his face.

The Elmira Hawkes's patched sails filled in the brisk wind that was blowing down the Penobscot. Her ropes creaked in the blocks and her squat bow lunged ahead, plowing up a mound of gray-brown foam. Nautical Nelson stood at the wheel and under knit brows surveyed now the impudent little ferry boat that chugged away off the port bow, now the gray icehouses and the tall church spires of Brewer.

"The pipes, lad, get out the pipes!" whispered Farquhar.

Up in the bow of the schooner, behind a huge pile of shingles, Wally MacDougald unwrapped his bagpipes, while Farquhar Stevenson clicked his heels together in eagerness to dance. The blare of the tuning drowned out all other sounds so that not one of the three was aware of a hoarse voice that bellowed furiously, nor heard catlike steps approaching on the deck. As Wally filled the bag and let his fingers fall across the chanter, a shadow darkened the shingles; as the first notes of "The Cock o' the North" wailed loudly, a hard hand was laid on Wally's shoulder.

Wally took his fingers from the chanter and high G was blended with the melodious hum of the drones. Over him stood Skipper Nautical Nelson. Nautical Nelson appeared to be a fat man, but there was solid bone and muscle to his huge body, and his double chin had a mournful, unhappy droop. In his eyes was a curious expression, catlike and unpleasant, strangely unlike the oily smirk with which he had greeted them early in the day.

"Can't have it," he said angrily. "Music is an abomination, an' that screechin,' caterwaulin' windbag thing you've got there is a special abomination o' the Devil."

"Well," said Danny Logue, sticking his thumbs under his suspenders, "what *can* we do to pass the time?"

"Do?" quavered Skipper Nelson in a tone that implied that he had not heard aright. "Do to pass the time?" He gasped for breath. "Lay for'ards an' fetch them shingles amidships!"

The three looked at each other and then at Captain Nelson, whose face was changing from crimson to purple. He spoke again more slowly but more harshly, and his small eyes seemed to become narrower and closer together. "Lay for'ard—an' fetch—them *shingles*—amidships! Bagpipes! Jehoshaphat!"

The light went out of Farquhar Stevenson's eyes. Danny's face grew long and sad, and Wally stared in unbelief: the first great dream was shattered; even at sea hard work confronted them.

When Nautical Nelson saw them piling shingles with a will, he gripped the wheel with both hands and watched the yellow bulk of High Head glide slowly by. When after an hour's brisk labor the shingles were ranged along the cabin, he cleared his throat loudly.

"Them's too high up," he yelled. "Pile them two top layers for'ards again!"

Another hour passed slowly.

"Now," cried Skipper Nelson, "we've

got to clean up a bit. Bangor's a dirty place an' dirt's contagious. MacDougald, he can rub up the paint; Stevenson, he can holystone the deck, an'—le's see—le's see—Logue, he can go below an' clean the cabin—it's awful dirty from the crew I had comin' up river."

The Elmira Hawkes was one of those small coastwise craft on which captain and crew occupy the cabin together in peaceful disregard for the etiquette that governs more pretentious vessels.

Captain Nelson leaned against the wheel, smoking his brown clay pipe, and watched them with calculating eyes. He was pleased to see them work; he was always pleased to see people work on board the Elmira Hawkes; it was said that he would spill lampblack on the deck so that his men, when they had nothing else to do, could clean it up; some went so far as to say that he had cut his own mainsheet in a calm so that his men could splice it.

"Bag-pipes! Jehoshaphat!" he muttered. In all the world there was nothing that he detested so utterly and so completely as the drone of the Scottish pipes. There was a reason for it, too, but the reason could only be found in the closed book of Nautical Nelson's past.

As the day wore on apace the Elmira Hawkes plowed down the river. Hamden, and Orrington, and Winterport loomed up in turn. The gray walls of Fort Knox, over which peered her antiquated cannon, rose beyond the river's bend and fell far astern. After a long time, the lights began to twinkle in the farmhouses that perched on the high banks and Captain Nelson nodded at the wheel. But as the day wore on, the three grew angrier and angrier. When night fell, and their empty bellies called for food, Wally and Farquhar began to talk in low tones that did not carry to the skipper's ears.

"Five dollars a month he's paying us!" muttered Farquhar.

"Well, I'm no' the one that made all the talk about a sailor's life an' ridin' 'round on ships with nothin' to do!"

For a time they scrubbed in silence.

"Now I wonder what Danny'll be doin'?" said Farquhar thoughtfully.

Wally made no reply.

The well-scoured deck was shining in the light of the sunset. The hills on the skyline were fringed with pointed firs and spruces. The two sat in the shelter of the shingle pile and gazed long and peacefully at the swiftly fading western light. But from Danny there was neither sign nor sound.

The schooner was a small craft. From somewhere aft came a low buzzing sound that rose gradually to considerable volume and died away in an audible gasp. Wally looked at Farquhar and grinned more broadly. Again and again that strange sound was repeated. It grew louder with every repetition. Wally held his hand before his mouth and whispered, "It's Danny! He's snorin'!"

Abaft the shingle pile, Nautical Nelson scratched his head. "Where's that steamer that's bellerin' so?" he called out.

Wally and Farquhar, bending over their work to conceal their laughter, were unable to speak.

"Well," the old man grumbled crustily, "let 'er bellow! I'm agoin' b'low and set out the grub! MacDougald, take the wheel an' hold her about two points west o' that little yeller light!"

Nautical Nelson paused on the ladder. He peered down into the cabin and saw a strange sight. His chin expanded, his eyes dilated. "May I be swigged!" he gasped.

He climbed on deck in clumsy haste, selected a bit of stout rope with a large knot at the end of it, tiptoed back to the companionway and with catlike silence and a celerity seemingly incongruous with his vast bulk disappeared into the dark cabin.

As another long snore shook the air and the crescendo of a second began bravely,

the two listeners on deck heard a rope swish through the air and land with a sharp crack. The crescendo was broken off by a wild yell. The rope whistled and cracked. A loud and angry voice roared hoarse reply to Nautical Nelson's wheezing tirade. There was the sound of running and racing and crashing and smashing and tumbling and banging down there in the darkness of the little cabin.

"You lumpin', lazy, lag-jawed, bat-eyed son of a down-east seacook!" Nautical Nelson yelled. "You thick-headed, lobster-backed, barnacle-brained scum of the clam-flats! You flounderin' human mudscow! You gallivantin' Mahon scullion! You club-footed bag-piper!" Constantly Nautical Nelson harked back to the detested bagpipes, for his was a mean soul with no love of music.

With a wild yell, Danny Logue broke from the cabin and leaped to the deck. A tin plate whistled by his head, flew over the rail, splashed and sank.

The voice below stopped and a lantern flickered; the Elmira Hawkes had turned from her course and the yellow light lay off the port quarter. The two noticed it at that very moment that Danny Logue came tumbling up on deck. Their one thought was to bring the yellow light once more beyond the bowsprit.

"Turn her round quick!" Farquhar cried, gripping the wheel. "Which way do we spin it?"

Already Captain Nelson's feet could be heard on the companionway.

The breeze was increasing and long waves were lapping against the hull of the Elmira Hawkes. Realizing only that she must be brought about, Wally and Farquhar, in serene ignorance of nautical affairs, threw the wheel hard over. The schooner swung slowly off. Then came the unforeseen.

Squarely, fairly, without sign or warning, the Elmira Hawkes jibed treacherously! Her booms swept the deck. Her sheets tightened with a report like the crack of a musket. Her sails filled and jerked against her mast. The rotten boltline on her ancient foresail gave way and the canvas was torn in a screaming rip. For a moment she lay nearly on beam end, then, slowly righting herself, she headed once more toward the yellow light. But her deckload of lumber was floating in the cold water of Penobscot Bay and Danny Logue was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Danny?" Wally cried.

The two stared into the black water to leeward.

"Danny, Danny! Speak, Danny, and we'll throw you a line!"

There was no answer.

Behind them, through the companionway, a large round head with double chin was thrust into the open air. Neither noticed it because the lantern had been smashed and the cabin was dark, but the voice that followed it demanded attention, for Nautical Nelson never lacked words wherewith to express emotion. "Sometimes they're wuthless—sometimes they're useless, sometimes they're destructive," he bellowed when he saw the stripped decks, "but of all the confounded, slamguzzled, sink-brained idjuts."

He paused, realizing for the first time the extent of the damage that had been done. There were no shingles piled amidships, there were no clapboards piled aft. A few joists still rested by the lee scuppers, and that was all. The deck-load was overboard and the black waters of the bay were slapping the side of the Elmira Hawkes as if hungry for more.

Like the comb of a turkey gobler, Nautical Nelson's double chin crimsoned and swelled; his brow knotted; the purple of his nose deepened. He looked at the two men who had left the wheel and were leaning over the ornate taffrail that decked the Elmira Hawkes's stern, calling into the black night, "Danny! Danny! Where are you, Danny?"

Nautical Nelson was known from Eastport, Maine, to Provincetown, as the most consistently ill-natured man on the New

England coast. Now that he had reason to be angry, instead of shouting and cursing and stamping and bawling like other men, he spoke to himself, sadly, in a low voice, as if to reinforce his determination. "They've lost my deck-load," he said. "They've drownded one of my crew; I'll finish 'em, that's what I'll do." He picked up a short piece of four by five timber, and crept along the deck toward the two, who were calling in vain to the missing third of the triumvirate.

Ignoring the responsibility that he himself had incurred by putting two green men at the wheel, he rose on his tiptoes behind Wally MacDougald and swinging the bit of timber through the air, brought it down with all his might at Wally's head. At that moment, however, a little squall danced into the mainsail and the Elmira Hawkes heeled before the gust. The blow missed Wally altogether and struck Farquhar Stevenson's hand on the rail.

Springing back with a yell, Farquhar looked into Nautical Nelson's eyes. Captain Nelson, always a man of wrath, had never been so angry as at that moment.

Like a flash, the skipper raised his club to strike again, and Farquhar lunged in under his guard, caught him round the waist, although his arms could scarcely encompass the huge body, and heaved mightily. But Nelson, lazy and indolent though he seemed, had worked long and hard in his younger years and his great bulk concealed strong muscles and wiry sinews. Farquhar, his hold broken, was flung his length on the deck.

As Nelson again swung his four by five club in the air, Wally leaped at his throat, and clung there with all his might and main. The big man's eyes flashed. His huge, pudgy hands clutched the little Scotchman's locked fingers and slowly forcing them apart he thrust MacDougald back on Farquhar's unconscious body.

Wally flung himself hard to the left, turned in the clutch of Nelson's two hands, and spun on his head like the featherweight wrestler that he was, but to no avail. Farquhar moved and groaned but one of the skipper's great hands held him in a relentless grasp. With his other, he drew a keen-pointed dirk and raised it with demoniacal fury.

The Elmira Hawkes was sailing of her own will. Her wheel turned listlessly this way and that, as she veered with the wind. Her split foresail flapped idly in long tatters, but her mainsail bellied full. Round in a great circle she swept, through the dark sea over which distant lights were glimmering, till jibs and mainsail flapped loosely in the head wind. She was carried along by her momentum till the sails filled again, then she heeled to port and swung on another tack. She had returned, unknown to the two who were fighting on her deck, to the very spot where she had jibed and split her foresail.

She bumped against floating joists and shingles, and clinging to one of these bundles of shingles was a man who watched the schooner with the split foresail loom out of the night until he was struck by her broad bows and knocked under water. He came up amidships, gasping, thrust out one broad hand, clutched the rail, and hauled himself up.

While he balanced himself by the stays, he saw by the light of the schooner's lantern the little group lying in the shelter of the cabin; he saw Nautical Nelson's huge bull neck swelling under his dirty collar; he saw the gleam of the drawn knife.

Danny Logue crouched on the rail, then sprang through the air, caught Nelson by the neck and crotch, lifted his two hundred and twenty pounds clear of the deck, took just three whirling steps and hurled the skipper headlong into the dark cabin. Nelson fell with a wild yell and thudded at the foot of the companionway in a crumpled heap. Getting on his feet, he clutched a carving knife and sprang up the companionway, but he looked into a pair of eyes the blaze of which dimmed his own. He saw silhouetted against the sky a great, sledgehammer fist, and heard

a terrible voice roar, "Come out like a man, yez inglorious apology for a shcoundrel, and I'll maul ye till ye wish ye was borned a choppin' block fer the relief that ye'd git by it!"

Nautical Nelson resisted his murderous impulse and retreated. He saw the light cut off and heard many timbers being piled on the hatch. Very cautiously he crossed the cabin and tried to force his way out but found to his chagrin that he was a prisoner on his own ship.

Wally helped Danny pile lumber over the cabin, and before the companionway was entirely buried, Farquhar Stevenson sat up, rubbed his head and asked what had happened.

"The boat sets funny," said Farquhar, when half the lumber in the hold had been transferred aft as an additional barricade, and the schooner was riding with the bow well in the air. "She sets funny an' we can't sail her. We'd better take down what's left of them sails."

They cut the halyards, and mainsail and jib came fluttering down.

There off Islesboro, with only the tattered foresail to rattle in the breeze, the Elmira Hawkes drifted at the mercy of wind and tide.

"Now," said Danny, with a strange twinkle in his eyes, "now for revenge!"

Revenge! There was one thing that Nautical Nelson abhorred above all else, and what that thing was each of the three amateur seamen knew well.

HOURS later the tug boat, Push and Pull, was churning its way up-river in the deeper darkness that precedes dawn.

"Them lights is actin' funny!" said her skipper.

"Hark!" said her mate, "what in the name o' mischief is that?"

Over the water came an eery sound that cut the mist like the scream of a siren horn. The skipper's ears, trained in the wild minors of his native Scotland, detected melody. "It's the pipes, man," he cried, "playin' 'Cock o' the North!'"

As the tug chugged over the gray sea to the drifting schooner, the first light of dawn broke in the East and revealed on the deck of that craft of strange behavior the shadow-like shape of a leaping man.

"What's he doin'?" asked the mate.

"He's dancin' the Highland Fling!" cried the skipper.

WHEN Nautical Nelson heard the timbers drawn from above him, he stormed up the companionway and blinked at the lights of the tug and at the dancing sea.

"Murder an' mutiny's been done!" he screamed. "Handcuff 'em—iron 'em—jail's too good for 'em—hangin' too cheap! They've clapped me in my own hold—they've lost my cargo—they've bust out my fores'l—they've played that devilish squeakin' bagpipe contrary to my precise orders. Mutiny! Murder! Hang 'em!"

He stopped suddenly. He recognized the captain of the tug.

"Captain Nelson," said that dignitary, "I'm a reliable man an' a Scotchman. I ain't seen nothin' wrong. I've found two good Scotchmen an' a friend of theirs, which is a friend of mine accordin', which has been abused some'in awful. One of 'em has been throwed overboard, an' the others is terrible misused. I'm goin' to take 'm right back to Bangor. As fer you, you kin hist your own sails, an' sail away where you like. There ain't no great of a wind now, an' no danger to you, more's the pity!"

And as the tug Push and Pull chugged away in the first light of morning, Nautical Nelson was serenaded by the parting strains of his particular abomination, a Scottish bagpipe.

As for the Cape Cod Finn, when he was told that three sailors had returned to Bangor and were extremely anxious to see him, he jumped the first freight out of town and never was heard from again, for, besides having a sense of humor, the Cape Cod Finn was a man of vast discretion.

THE BRIDEGROOM ELECT

By MARION HILL

RE-PACKING a cat show is nothing to it. Unloading a circus is nothing to it. The proper distribution of chattering, wild-eyed immigrants has a noise and stress peculiarly its own. The only thing that jabbers more insanely than an Italian male who doesn't know what's coming next nor where from, is the Italian female. And custom alone keeps the officials on Detention Island from going as frantic as their charges.

"This is the craziest bunch I've handled in a month of Sundays," remarked the smiling matron, placidly, to the inspector. "And if it weren't for that girl Bianca, who's mothering everything she can lay a finger on, I wouldn't know half the time whether I was on my head or my heels."

Hearing her name mentioned, Bianca, who had been trying to cajole somebody's lustily bad-tempered baby, left off trying and hurried towards the matron, asking excitedly:

"Ees Pedro for me? Ees?"

"No, he isn't," confessed the matron, reluctantly. "But there's plenty of time yet, Bianca. Don't worry."

Bianca's beaming smile turned to a pathetic, tremulous glimmer; then she patiently went back to the squirming strange baby.

"Think it's going to be all right with her?" asked the inspector, in a low voice of more than usual sympathy. He too, had recognized in Bianca a certain individualizing force that turned her from an immigrant into a woman.

"Yes, I think so," replied the matron. "We have located him by 'phone and sent for him. He's gone for the marriage license. He's Pedro Vanini—has a little shoe shop on Third Avenue."

"Record good?"

"Quite. He works hard, saves money, is a favorite with the girls, but has kept pretty faithful to Bianca the whole two years he has been waiting for her. In fact, he's spread such reports of Bianca's beauty that the quarter is wild to see her. Queer ideas of beauty, hasn't he?"

"You call her plain?" asked the inspector, surprised.

The matron took a new look at the Italian girl, rapidly summing up her points.

Bianca's age was all of twenty, which meant that she had outgrown the delicacy of what must have been an utterly lovely youth. In exchange, she had attained the proportions of a statue—big-bosomed, large-waisted, and firm-footed. Her eyes were glorious—the appealing velvety brown eyes of a white heifer. Enough hair escaped from under the black silk handkerchief to proclaim itself a coppery gold.

A short, thick, much-gathered skirt whose one merit was durability; a home-made black sateen waist with red glass buttons on it; thick white stockings, constantly in evidence; and shoes of stout leather with cords as strong as cables, successfully concealed all beauty of outline.

Perhaps it was this canal-boat style of foot-covering that decided the natty little matron.

"Yes, I call her plain," she admitted, gently. "Don't you?"

"Not much," proclaimed the inspector. "When Bianca gets into a man's eye she sort of fills it and stays there. Bet she'll make the kind of wife that can turn an omelet with one hand, hold a baby in the other, and open the oven door with her foot in time to save the bread from burning; do it with a lazy grace and a dazzling smile, too. Pedro's in luck."

Here the inspector was peremptorily summoned to attend to one jabbering group, and the matron to another, while the work of ladling out the immigrants went steadily on.

Meanwhile, the baby having dropped to sleep in its miserably frightened mother's arms, Bianca sat down on the stuffed, knotted blanket that represented her trunk, and surveyed the excited scenes around her with an alertness of sympathy that made her heart soar with the lucky and sink with the luckless.

Here went, smiling, a snapping-eyed Neapolitan grandmother of forty, volubly claimed by a Harlemized, up-to-date daughter-in-law.

Next, the mother of the sleeping baby emitted a sudden squawk of joy and gamboled heavily into the arms of a Syrian organ-grinder who had brought the monkey along to be one of the reception committee. While the re-united husband and wife hurled conversation at each other, the baby and the monkey exchanged silent grimaces, the baby in mother's arms, the monkey in father's. All four wandered off to happiness.

The next scream that came to Bianca's ears was not one of joy, but was wrung from a tortured heart, as poor, ear-ringed sixteen-year-old Giulia Riccabocca was told that her fisherman fiancé had been drowned a week ago, and that she must return to Sicily without even seeing his grave.

"Dear Mother of Our Lord pity her and comfort her," prayed Bianca, bending her golden head over her clasped hands; adding irrepressibly, "and save my Pedro alive for me!"

On the top of sorrow came wedding bells, for blushing Aanchen Gratz was taken in marriage by a stout young German who had "delicatessen shop on Amsterdam Avenue," written all over him.

For Uncle Sam watches over his new daughters with wise care and does not permit one of them to depart with a man until she is his wife. Uncle Sam often has to provide the parson, the ring, the best man, the bridesmaid, the cake and the kiss; but he does it. If the young men temporize about marrying them, back home they go.

Reaching this stage in her ruminations, Bianca awesomely wondered what would happen to her if she were thus deported; for "home" there was none. Her last relative was dead. There was even less of "home" on the other side than there was on this.

Viewed from the near distance, New York was just miles upon miles of battlemented castles. And there wafted from it no fragance of ripening grapes, of wild thyme and of roses, but only rank whiffs of rotting, barnacled logs floating on an extremely dirty sea.

Already there descended upon Bianca's lonely heart the pangs of exile. She seemed to have nothing left of her own, —neither country, friends nor language. Like everything else, language has to be lost to be appreciated. Bereft of Italian, Bianca was as one dumb. And it's awkward to be dumb in a strange land. In a way she had a foundation of English; that is, she was sitting on a book captivatingly labeled, "How to Speak English in Twenty-five Lessons. Twenty-five cents."

Bianca had tried to buy a "How to Speak American," since it was to America she was coming; but such a book was not on the market. Evidently no one spoke American. On the way over, Bianca had tried to study, beginning with a churchly affair called "Cardinal Numbers," proceeding thus—"Own, tuo, tree,

few-or," and so on, to the grand American consummation of Million. She had a certain reason for wanting to know about numbers. The rest of the book interested her but little, for it was composed of sentences which she felt very sure she would have no opportunity to use upon Pedro.

Pedro, Pedro! If she could but see him, how easy would it be to love this blue American sky, this grand city of stone that was pronounced New-a Yok! As for the lack of flowers—well, there are always flowers where Love is. After Pedro—flowers!

All this time Pedro was in quite as much of a happy ferment as was she. Bathed in bliss and arrayed in his beautiful ten-dollar wedding suit, he was hurrying to the island as fast as subway, elevated, feet, tug-boat and brother, could take him. For Andreas Vanini came along to be best man.

Pedro was undersized, lithe, lizardly and radiant, from his oiled hair to his vaselined yellow boots. His suit was of a brown so light that it was almost chrome yellow. His glistening satin tie, under a still more glistening celluloid collar, was as purple as a bunch of young grapes, matching to perfection the hue of his silk socks. The shine of his eyes and the flash of his teeth were exactly what might be expected from one who had a marriage license in his pocket and magnificient creases in his trousers. From Pedro's red lips kept bubbling snatches of a popular song exhorting some one to "Peel an onion, and weep for me,"—or as Pedro preferred it—"Pill a yonyon, an' wippa for me."

What helped along the merriness of Pedro was the knowledge that his shoe business could lock its doors for a few hours without causing a shrinkage in the day's receipts. For Pedro's trade was not so much the selling of new shoes as the restoration of old ones; and everybody knows that old shoes travel to the cobbler at night.

And Andreas? There was no song on the lips of Andreas, and no radiance about him anywhere except that he held in one huge hand, as a gift for the bride, a bunch of pink carnations and asparagus fern—the least faded of his down-hearted stock—for the business of Andreas was that of cut flowers and it takes an awful amount of coaxing to keep up the courage of a meek-souled rose that wants to die. No wonder that shambling big Andreas was pathetically glum, and that his dark eyes, usually so trustful and calm, stared drearily into a doubtful future. His dingy garments hung loosely from his big frame, calling attention to the fact that a few good meals could be made welcome.

"De trub' with you is that you too damn soft," burst irritatedly from Pedro at last, after a furtive disgusted scrutiny of the shabbiness of his best man. They were walking together up Third Avenue in the rays of a sun that was thoroughly merciless about showing up the threadbare seams and ancient grease spots of Andreas. To be sure, it played even by showing up also the strong grace of his form and the honesty of his dark face; but Pedro was too accustomed to seeing these in Andreas to feel the value of them at a time when a clean shirt and a new tie would have been so much more useful. "Much-a too damn soft. How you expect annybodda can give away mon' an' keep it too." Here Pedro delivered himself glibly of an Italian proverb to the effect that if you smear yourself with honey you must resign yourself to being devoured by flies.

Andreas shrugged his huge shoulders apologetically and dismissively. Pedro was referring to the fact, too often discussed, that Andreas had been fool enough to pay away his recent earnings to a widow with three babies; the inevitable result being that Andreas was seventy frightful dollars in debt to his landlord, and that the sorry little flower-stand was threatened by the sheriff—at

a time of year, too, when flowers were just promising to be profitable. Unfortunate that Andreas was made of stuff that can't bear to see babies starve!

Here Pedro dropped all unpleasant thoughts and resumed singing. "Pill a yonyon," for the reason that a very pretty ninety-eight cent girl was passing and casting eyes at him. Her hat cost ninety-eight cents, its feather forty-nine; her lawn waist was a ninety-eight center, her pink beads forty-niners; her blue velvet skirt cost ninety-eight cents a yard; her champagne-colored silk hose, forty-nine; her fearfully high-heeled slippers ninety-eight cents apiece.

"Tell-a me, she some peach, eh?" said Pedro, still swimming in the bliss of her surreptitious smile, and wishing in a general, unnamed way, that he could be a Mormon. "But," firmly, "no man's girl ain't got nothings on me now I have my beauty of a Bianca. Why don't you try getta girl, my broth', like-a that peach jus' gone by, eh?"

Andreas slowly pivoted his big sunburned neck and took a repudiative look at the damsel from the rear.

"Fall a lit' rain an' she spoil like-a da mush," decided Andreas.

"Sss!" sneered Pedro, contemptuously. "You don't know good t'ing when you see it. You make-a m' sick; you make-a m' hat ache." Pedro meant head. Even at that, he meant very little, and, singing again, blithely ducked into the subway that was to take him and Andreas to the waiting one—*la bella Bianca.*

BACK on the Island.

"Find B. Campionaro," said the inspector, reading from a card, and addressing the matron tersely. "Two men here for her; one big, one runty. Runty one has a marriage license. Bet she's a strapper. All the little men want to marry elephants. Who's B. Campionaro?"

"Why, it's Bianca!" cried the matron, delightedly. "And her Pedro! I'll get her."

This was not difficult, for Bianca, having heard the magic combination of names, Pedro and Bianca, was already billowing toward her, the roll of blankets in one strong hand, and the equally soggy, "How to Speak English," in the other.

"*Now* ees Pedro?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes, indeed," chirruped the matron reassuringly. "Come along. Here's Pedro, and the best man, and the marriage license. All that's needed is the bride. So, come, Bianca!"

Smiling wanly and half fainting with excitement, Bianca followed the matron into a private office, and there, seeing Pedro in the flesh and the glory of purple trimmings, dropped book and blankets to fly into his suddenly wooden arms. Her eyes were blinded with her own tender tears as she uttered bits of golden Italian, calling him her man, her salvation, her true heart, her ever-faithful one.

Then, remembering Andreas and the presence of others, she shyly drew away from Pedro.

"For my sister," said Andreas, extending the carnations.

"Ah, my big, kind Andreas!" she cried, accepting the flowers and rapturously kissing them, touching them up the while with an artistic hand that put the asparagus fern in exactly the right place.

Her kiss was for the blossoms, not for the donor, but it gave Andreas a queer thrill of hot pleasure. They were his flowers—from his hand—and she had kissed them. A little more and he knew that tears would come into his eyes, for the sight of Bianca's peasant costume had brought back to him the picture of home, reminding him of the fragance of the sweet garden herbs around his mother's cottage, and recalling to his exiled ears the solemn music of the bell on the little church where he and Bianca and Pedro had been confirmed when children. Mother—Italy—Bianca; he had not before known how deeply dear the

three words were to him. He thought that Bianca looked as beautiful as a saint, with her golden hair demurely bound down by its black kerchief, and the mystic love-light in her dark eyes.

But Pedro? Pedro's jaw had dropped open from dismay. Surely his once-beloved had grown thicker, older, coarser! When she was seventeen, he had adored her for her sylph-like delicacy of outline, for the pomegranate red of her young mouth, and for the laughter and daring of the maid that is her property before she gets good sense. This earnest-eyed, solid Madonna was not the need of his volatile, "pill-a-yonyon" heart.

And oh, those clodhopping shoes, that baggy, fustian skirt, that handkerchief for a hat—how they would wring helpless giggles from the pretty, ninety-eight cent girls! The marriageable belles of Third Avenue, they who could dress like countesses on three dollars a week, were all agog to see the Italian damsel whose fascinations had put theirs in the shade. Pedro felt that he could never, never show them Bianca and survive. He would be the laughing-stock of the quarter.

Pedro Vanini's horror was so pronounced even in its wordless state, that a sense of jar and trouble began to descend upon all concerned, upon the three principals and the three subordinates; for an interpreter had been called near to facilitate and validate the expected marriage service.

Bianca was the last to feel the tragedy and the first to speak.

"My Pedro, what has gone wrong with you?" she gasped, convulsively pressing the flowers to her bosom as if hoping they might save it from the knife.

But the cruel knife was driven home.

"It is you that has gone wrong," answered Pedro, brutally explicit. "You are no longer beautiful. My love was for your loveliness; and now that the loveliness has gone, the love has gone. I am sorry. But so it is."

"Pedro—in pity—"

"I am not to blame."

"You sent for me, you sent for me," wailed Bianca, in torture.

"What I sent for was the pretty girl that you used to be," explained Pedro, mercilessly. "Not for you."

"Oh, why can I not die?" gasped Bianca, as the wound widened. "What am I to do?"

Here the matron put her arms around her, while the interested interpreter had a little verbal struggle with the recalcitrant bridegroom. Andreas, with his big arms swinging idly at his sides, took no part in the affair except to turn his somber eyes from one actor to another.

"Now you try to calm yourself, Bianca Campionaro," soothed the matron, "and see if we can't fix things for you. You are young and strong, and there is plenty of room for you in the world even if this—this shrimp pie *doesn't* want you. Haven't you anywhere else to go?"

Having followed this, in English though it was, Bianca shook her head desolately.

"Haven't you any woman friend over here?" pursed the matron. "No sister—aunt—nothing?"

"No, no, no," sobbed Bianca.

The matron looked serious. She even began to have a doubt of Bianca. The whole game might have been prearranged, in order to get a young girl into the country. It wouldn't do to be lenient, for there were plenty of spotters around ready to report the least stretching of the law. The matron looked inquiringly at the interpreter.

"Can't do anything with the mule," he confessed, releasing Pedro.

Again Bianca caught the sense of it.

"Then must I go back?" she questioned frantically. "Oh, that terrible steerage again! And this time no hope, but shame, to be forever at my side! Yes, let me go back to hang my head and try to close my ears to the bitter laughter of all who know me. And what will they

think? They will not believe my tale. No one with a heart could believe it. They will be sure I have done some wrong. Oh, Pedro, Pedro!"

In answer to this heart-rending appeal, Pedro slowly drew the marriage license from his pocket.

The matron, the inspector, and the interpreter all brightened comfortably, giving Bianca a momentary hope.

She took a step towards her affianced, timidly holding out her hands.

"You are sorry," she translated, softly. "You are going to marry me?"

"No!" said Pedro, scowling and giving a vicious tug to his purple necktie. "I am going to destroy the license."

His "No!" brought forth two pronounced results. One was that Bianca shrank back as if lashed by a whip; the other was that Andreas lifted one of his huge hands till he could have a look at it, then slowly closed it into a fist which landed an unhasty but voluminous smash full in his brother's mouth.

Pedro went over backward and lay flat.

With a low, mothering cry, Bianca attempted to reach him, but Andreas used his fist arm to bar her from the rescue.

"Let him lie on the ground; that is the proper bed for a dog," he commanded sternly.

"Andreas!—your brother!—a *dog?*"

"Can you say that he has not acted as one?" asked Andreas, simply.

"No, I cannot, I cannot!" admitted Bianca, breaking into a passion of tears.

"Weep," permitted Andreas, drawing her toward him that she might cry against his shoulder.

By now Pedro, ceasing to see stars, sat up from the waist and leaned his giddy head in one shaking hand. In amiable befuddlement he sang two whole lines of "Pill a yonyon an' wippa for me," before recollecting what had happened. Then he jumped snarlingly to his feet and tried to pull a dagger.

"Ah, quit-a da fool," superbly said Andreas, in his best English, "an' gimme da lice'."

He spoke in his tone of elder brother, head of the house of Vanini. So Pedro shrugged his shoulders and handed over the marriage license.

"Bianca," said Andreas, changing from his best English to his best Italian, "you are going to marry *me*." He frustrated her attempt to escape by softly holding her closer, forcing her to listen. "Let it happen at once for on this paper we have but to write Andreas for Pedro. Also, I love you, Bianca. I did not know how much till you kissed the flowers I gave you, and arranged them so as they would sell. I need you as well as love you. My business is fading away for want of you. But—first—I am a very poor man; are you afraid to be poor?"

"I am not," stammered Bianca. It committed her to nothing.

"One more month and I may not even have a flower-stand; for I owe much money; very much money; more money than I could ever save; more money than Pedro could lend me—seventy-five dollars," confessed Andreas bravely. "But such home as I have, I offer to you, and will fight hard to save it for you. I think, too, you could fight better than I. For would you not like to work with flowers, Bianca? To tie lovely yellow rosebuds into bunches, to group the dewy little violets and to keep carnations from withering by— by kissing them, Bianca?"

"I would cut the stems and put them in water and set them in a cold place," stammered Bianca practically. With the back of her hand she had wiped the tears from her shining eyes. "And I would love it!"

"And love *me?*"

"I have always loved you as my good big brother," she whispered tremblingly.

"Then it will be easy to love me as your good big husband," Andreas said.

Thus it happened that Bianca Campionaro became Mrs. Vanini after all.

It was not till after the ceremony that Pedro became sorry for what he had done. And then he became *very* sorry. For the ninety-eight cent girls would have the laugh yet at his expense.

Bianca, with an adorably lovely pink flush replacing the steerage pallor on her young cheek, shyly unbuttoned the top button of her unfashionable blouse and extracted from a warm and fragant hidingplace, a wonderfully likely-looking wad of something.

"For my dear man," she said, depositing it in Andreas's disbelieving grasp.

"What is it?" he asked, rather wildly.

"Speak English," commanded the smiling matron. "You are an American citizen now," Bianca.

Thus exhorted, Bianca made magnificent use of one of her Twenty-five Lessons. She said only three words, yet they were as magical as a fairy's wand, turning the doubtful future into an assured heaven; transplanting the flowerstand to a corner of Fifth Avenue and filling it with everfragrant blossoms; clothing Bianca in the best of raiment and turning her beautiful golden hair loose under a bewitching hat; to say nothing of furnishing Andreas with a new suit. What she said was:

"Eight hundr' doll's!"

ON BIG TIME

By JAMES HENRY THOMPSON

BENSVILLE is undoubtedly the tankiest of all tank towns. The degree of its tankiness may be denoted by the truthful statement that it is two junction points removed from the main line. The common carrier by which the final stage of the journey to its purlieus must be made was constructed expressly and purposely to bring the world to Ebensville and supposedly to give Ebensville egress to the world. The world has never shown any noticeable alacrity in taking advantage of the opportunities offered it.

If Ebensville had gained place in the superlative degree of tank towns even that distinction was hyperbolical, for the tank was replaced by a slimy millpond from which thirsty locomotives, none too particular about the purity of the waters they drank, sucked a combination of mud, tadpoles and water plants into their tanks. Ebensville was not even a regular tank town. To all except its inhabitants the town was an abomination of desolation, a slough of despond, a cave of despair and a number of other execrable things whose poetic nomenclature in no way coincided with the denominations profanely put upon the place. Nonresidents of the town seldom spoke of it without placing a qualifying "damned" before any other descriptive adjectives.

More than to any other class Ebensville was a stench in the nostrils of the theatrical profession. The folk of the stage, notoriously fastidious about towns—so much so that an actor has never yet given unqualified approval to any town—were more than usually censorious of Ebensville, and their obloquy rose to absolute indecencies of speech when they were forced to sojourn there.

Ebensville boasted an opera house. No other town would have boasted of the structure. That the house of entertainment was called an opera house also indicates that the place was yet in that grandiose, immature and elemental stage of development where "theater" failed utterly to distinguish its artistic ambitions. Ebensville's theater was lighted by gas, and even the most pulchritudinous of soubrettes fears gaslight with its flickering unkindness.

On Saturday nights when the population of Ebensville was augmented by visitors from the adjacent country, thereby making a transient census of at most two thousand souls, shows were offered in the opera house. This Saturday night orgy of art was a deplorable habit in the eyes of the "profession," but it was fostered by greedy theatrical agents who stood ready to supply any sort of entertainment from dancing bears to guaranteed Eskimo prima donnas. The bears did not grumble much at Ebensville, but the Eskimo prima donnas were wont to sigh for the comforts of Arctic igloos.

No trains left Ebensville on Sundays, and those unfortunate entertainers who came to amaze and amuse were compelled to remain in the rustic desolation until the 12:30 train on Monday could transport them to civilization again, too late to open a Monday show and therefore deprived of at least a half week's work. Ebensville was the one-night stand par execration, and in the office of

the booking agent who supplied talent for its Saturday night theatrical feasts the name of the town was sufficient warning that all ladies should leave the room.

McHarter and Murphy, Monarchs of Mirth, were booked to appear at the Ebensville Opera House. The description of Ebensville has been introduced to afford a clue to the status of McHarter and Murphy.

It was in January, 1914, that McHarter and Murphy indicated to a booking agent that they were satiated with leisure and had a great desire, yearning and eagerness to amuse and edify an audience somewhere. Their eagerness led the agent to believe, quite correctly, that they did not greatly care just where the somewhere was. He booked them for Ebensville. They shuddered and mumbled and half demurred, but their pleadings were of no avail. "That or nothing," was the stony-hearted agent's ultimatum that carried both threat and promise.

The vaudeville team traveled to the first junction point in peace and harmony. At the second junction point dissension reared its ugly head. In the stuffy smoker of the accommodation train that ambled over the rusty rails as though uncertain whether their surface was a smoother track than the rotting ties upon which they laid, criminations and recriminations were passed. By the time the Monarchs of Mirth had reached Ebensville their conversation become hectic, florid, heated and frankly ungentle.

" 'Twas but ten years ago that we was booked solid over the big time," said McHarter in bitter reminiscence.

" 'Twas less than that that we played eighteen weeks solid for Loew," said Murphy.

"And then ten weeks on the Sun circuit," added McHarter.

"And five for Keith," remembered Murphy.

"Two for Moore," contributed McHarter.

"Split weeks for anybody," sorrowed Murphy.

"Ebensville!" cursed McHarter.

"Hell!" profaned Murphy.

After a period of dejected silence McHarter again spoke:

"We'd be playing big time yet if you hadn't been too stubborn to change the act," he accused.

"You've never been nothing but a feeder and you can't get another partner, so what're you kickin' about?" retorted Murphy.

"The act is on the hog!" pronounced McHarter inelegantly.

"It always made a big hit 'til you got so stale you couldn't work up to me," said Murphy.

"The lines was cold turkey ten years ago," gloomily observed McHarter.

"All they need is the punch a good snappy feeder could give 'em," Murphy replied.

"You couldn't get anything new into that ivory dome of yours with a diamond drill."

"That piece of concrete on your shoulders is too solid for any good 'cept to wear a hat on."

"We wouldn't be booked in this stub end of the world if either of us was any good," said McHarter with a fine unselfish desire to share any blame for failure.

"There's lots worse acts done a comeback and landed with their names in electric lights," opined Murphy.

From this bit of conversation, a conversation that was continued in the same tempo and temper until the creaking, rattling 'bus carried the vaudevillians to the sour-smelling Ebensville hotel, it may be gleaned that McHarter and Murphy were somewhere near the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder—and going down. As a matter of fact the Monarchs of Mirth were not only at the lowest rung, their feet were swung in

air ready to touch common ground. Other acts that were still three or four rungs up the ladder, either in process of ascending or descending, referred to McHarter and Murphy as dead ones.

For more than a decade McHarter and Murphy had worked side by side. Once in the dear, dead days they ardently wished to recall they had "knocked 'em cold" at every performance. Pasted in the lid of Murphy's shabby old trunk were press notices that gave them much praise and credit as headliners in vaudeville houses whose very name on a contract was guarantee of an act's excellence. But McHarter and Murphy had made the grievous error of supposing that vaudeville audiences are constant in their affections. They had clung too closely to the belief that what was once good shall always be good.

Material that was new in the past generation may become novel to the succeeding one, but not if it has been peddled around constantly in the interim. A good joke after a rest of sufficient time comes back stronger than ever; but the resting period is the most important ingredient of the formula that shall produce rejuvenation. Many a sage brush drummer has gone back into the sticks and discovered a hoary old yarn and brought it back and with it earned a reputation almost as enviable as that of the geologist who discovered long-buried portions of a dinosaur. The relish of a jest lies not so much in its originality as in the infrequency with which it is heard.

McHarter and Murphy had not changed a line of their act since that patter had been culled and collated from almanacs, jest books and those collections of ready-to-wear theatrical material known as "budgets." There was a time in the heyday of their popularity when less famous teams had picked and chosen freely from their lines and thus duplicated manyfold the repetition that was to send their rib-tickling witticisms into the boneyard of desuetude. Their stage business, still unvaried, had been copied by a score of burlesque comedians, and even the amateurs who produce hose company minstrels in such towns as Ebensville had essayed the famous comedy.

In all the pristine brightness of their act it was good—too good. It was so good that within one brief season they had a score of imitators—some of them as funny as their originals. Then there came years when the act never got better than the "A" or "E" position on programs of theaters where the best seats sold for fifty cents on Saturdays and holidays. From the two-a-day to three-a-day houses they had dropped; then to continuous, later to the sandwich circuit, where self-acknowledged artists are insultingly introduced between celluloid dramas. And now to Ebensville!

Waterloo was nothing but a name—a way station—until Napoleon met defeat there. Then it became an institution and a simile. Ebensville was destined to become an equally tragic marker in the career of McHarter and Murphy.

It is but reasonable to suppose that two men who have been repeating the same identical performance at least twice a day for more than a decade must form a habit. The act of McHarter and Murphy had become a cacoethes—if you know what that is. They went through their routine of speech and action with as little mental effort as they used in winking or sleeping. The words rolled off their tongues and the movements rolled off their muscles, with exactly the same flexions and inflections each day. The mirth of the monarchs was involuntary; they worked much as does the attendant of some mechanical contrivance who needs only to see that the proper thing is in the proper place at the proper time. Either of the actors could do a sum in mental arithmetic or worry about where he was going to eat next

week without in any way disturbing the coincident progress of the act. As a matter of record, the worrying process had become almost as deep-seated a habit as the act itself.

So McHarter and Murphy, Monarchs of Mirth, at length came to Ebensville.

The bucolic audience in the opera house had sat with bated breath and awe-opened eyes while two reels of The Perils of a Great City had been unreeled, and the resolves that the picture encouraged boded ill for the revenues of the railway that gave Ebensville egress to the world. Then the screen was rolled up into the shallow flies, a gaudy street scene was lowered into "two," and a card at the side of the stage announced McHarter and Murphy. Time was when such an announcement would have won a round of applause, but Ebensville sat unmoved.

Murphy waddled to the center of the stage. His rotund face was rouged and his nose puttied and purpled. A goatee adorned his chin, but his upper lip was bare. On his head was a mangy untrimmed wig of tow hair, and on top of the wig was a derby hat ridiculously small. His clothes were of violent plaids, baggy and stuffed to make him corpulent, and on his feet were enormous flat-bottomed shoes. He spoke in a brogue that was intended to be broken German. It was much broken.

"Ladies und vot come mit you," he began. "I haf come here to-day to undress you upon a subjects vich is the subjects upon vich I spokes."

Ebensville emitted a unanimous groan.

Then McHarter came slithering from the left wing, tall and lanky. His clothes were of a striped pattern to accentuate his leanness, and his face was made up into a set expression of melancholy. He sneaked behind Murphy and while the orator was fumbling with his distorted language dealt him a resounding blow with a slapstick, at which Murphy simulated acute pain and ceased his efforts to "undress" the audience.

Then followed a series of quips and jests known to the theatrical profession as sidewalk conversation, the point of which was emphasized by blows from the slapstick in the hands of McHarter. A brief excerpt from this dialogue will suffice to indicate the antique antics of the Monarchs:

McHarter: "Do they feed you well at your boarding house?"

Murphy: "Chure! Ve had three kinds of soup to-day: noodle, poodle and kioodle." (Slap on the anterior portion of Murphy's padded anatomy.)

McHarter: "You're pretty good on grammar; how would you punctuate this sentence: 'While Mary was walking down the street she fell'?"

Murphy: "I'd chust make a dash after Mary." (Slap on the posterior.)

McHarter: "Why do you like to have me pound you?"

Murphy: "Ach! It feels so gute ven you stop." (Slap on the protuberant stomach.)

McHarter: "I promised my mother I never would be an actor."

Murphy: "Vel, you kept your word." (Slap across the legs.)

McHarter: "I talked when I was six years old."

Murphy: "Dot's nothing; I cursed the day I vas born." (Slap on the broad shoulders.)

McHarter: "Where did you learn to dance?"

Murphy: "I vas taught the one-step by my two step-sisters." (Slap, slap, slap on divers places.)

And so the act went on to come to its climax with an awkward dance in which McHarter repeatedly released his hold on Murphy to allow him to fall clumsily.

Ebensville was plainly not appreciative of the efforts of the Monarchs of Mirth. The audience groaned in unison with McHarter's slapstick and some-

times anticipated the point of a joke by taking the words from Murphy's mouth. When the much-slapped leader of the team had rolled from the stage after his last clumsy fall there was an uncomplimentary and ominous silence in the auditorium. Not a hand was raised in applause, and as the stage hands put out a card announcing Madam Verbena and her trained cockatoo, Murphy looked at McHarter and his carmined lips grew putty-colored.

"It's the end!" he said.

"Damned rubes!" consoled McHarter.

In their dressing room the Monarchs of Mirth stuffed their plaided and striped costumes, their mangy wigs and their tin makeup boxes into the trunk and Murphy savagely turned the key.

At the theater office, where the teammates applied for their pay envelope, the house manager added his insult:

"Fine frost you two birds are! I'll get a new agent if he wishes any more like you onto me!"

Time was when house managers had been glad to exchange cheery words with McHarter and Murphy. Now as the latter grabbed for the thin pay envelope he spat at the manager a heartfelt invitation to go to hell.

Without speech the comedians dragged themselves to their cheerless hotel room. There they went about preparations to retire constrained and brief of talk.

"We're through, Bob," finally said Murphy as he reached to turn out the gas, ashamed that the light should show how completely he *was* through.

"Damned rubes!" repeated McHarter.

"It ain't them; it's us, Bob," mourned Murphy. "We've peddled the old hokum too long. They're wise to it even in this jumping off place. We're dead ones. Might as well admit it."

"Aw let's get a new act. I wanted to years ago."

"Now lay off that, Bob. 'Tain't no time to talk 'bout what we ought to have done. You know you and me can't work a new act. We've done this old stuff so long it's part of us. We can't change it if we wanted to. You can't teach an old dog new tricks, and that goes for us. I tell you we're done!"

"We can't quit cold. We got to try again, ain't we?" eagerly asked the optimistic McHarter.

"I *know!* There ain't no use of tryin'. It can't be done. We've tried 'em all and now here in this end of the world we get the hook! You and me're dead ones, Bob."

"But look here, Tim. There must be some place where we can get by. Let's not quit 'til we have to. You and me've been partners too long to break up now. We're both young yet. Let's look around a little and frame a new act."

"'T ain't bein' young that counts, Bob. We've gone stale. We've done the same thing so long it's a habit with us. We couldn't do anything else if we tried. Not even a medicine show, if there was any such thing any more, would have us. If we can't get by here it's curtains for us anywhere."

"Couldn't we try working lodge and smoker dates?"

"They'd kill us!"

Then followed a long, heavy silence in which the Monarchs of Mirth belabored their aching brains for some solution to the problem of existence that confronted them. McHarter broke the silence:

"I've got it, Tim!" he exclaimed, and thwacked his partner's back as resoundingly as he had done with the slapstick.

The melancholy Murphy turned from his morose and hopeless contemplations. "Well, spill it then," he commanded.

"Let's go across the pond. They're slow over there, and our stuff might go big. We've got enough saved up to get us across and it's worth taking a chance on. There's enough music halls to keep us going for two or three seasons, and maybe we could learn a new act by then."

Murphy pondered the proposition in silence for a time, then grudgingly assented.

"Maybe that's a good idea, Bob. It's our last chance, anyhow."

So it came about that when the spring warmth was just beginning to reveal the ugliness of winter's litter McHarter and Murphy sailed from New York, second class, with their battered old trunk all pasted over with theater and hotel labels, on a slow-scheduled steamer whose destination was Liverpool.

The theatrical organs had been supplied with copy for a notice, that in time appeared briefly in the smallest type the journals used:

WELL KNOWN ACT ON ENGLISH TIME
The well known and long established vaudeville team of McHarter and Murphy, after a long period of successes in America, have sailed for England to fill several seasons of bookings.

Now it happened that in 1914 there had been a great influx of American vaudeville acts into England. Some of the acts had been sent thither by success and some by adversity. The tradition had grown current that England was a lucrative field where excellence was highly rewarded, mediocrity stood a great chance and even absolute badness was condoned. British managers were thus enabled to pick and choose from a great array of acts. The vaudeville market was glutted with native acts, American acts and acts from the antipodes, whence new crops of performers are constantly and numerously springing. Actors were as plentiful in London as berries on bushes, and the most provincial of British theaters could command bills of unusual quality. McHarter and Murphy were up against keen competition.

The Monarchs of Mirth were at error in their estimate of the British critical mind, and of British theatrical appreciation. Their efforts to "bull" their way to bookings met no response from the complacent agents, and many discouraging days went by before they were given a tryout at a waterfront music hall down somewhere in Pennyfields. It was not an auspicious theater in which to try any act, least of all one that made no pretense of pandering to the crass animalism and sensuality of the neighborhood. The mixed population of the docks likes its theatricals with a dash of fleshings on a female form and a sauce of impertinence from rouged feminine lips. The very newest and smartest of sidewalk conversation carries little appeal to Pennyfields. The successful raconteur in that opium-sweetened and filth-bittered locality must lard his minstrelsy with stronger words than censors will allow to be spoken from the stage.

McHarter and Murphy, who needed the most tolerant audience in the world to win charitable applause, fell upon evil days and the Pennyfields audience drove them from the shabby stage with a tumult of "boos" and a torment of missiles.

Unfortunately again their London debut was made upon a night when a contagion of deviltry had taken hold upon Pennyfields. Once started upon its riotous way in the music hall, the disorder spread and other and more meritorious acts than that of the Monarchs of Mirth suffered. McHarter and Murphy were subjected to profane revilings at the mouths of the other actors and when the police finally succeeded in quelling the disturbance their reports carried in stolid detail the fact that the rottenness of the American act of McHarter and Murphy was to blame for the near-riot. Of course, the papers became possessed of this information and unfeelingly spread the news.

The theatrical agents in England closed their doors to McHarter and Murphy almost as soon as they had opened them just a crack. Even in Manchester and north to the Scottish border the news was bruited, and not a music hall cared to risk another appearance of the Monarchs.

Lean and hungry were the days of that summer. The slender reserves of the partners were dissipated by demands for food and lodgings, and their persistence in seeking bookings met only profane rebuffs. They grew to intrude their company upon other American "artists" so frequently that they were shunned wherever the actors had met and boasted.

McHarter and Murphy slipped from the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder and landed in the common mud at the bottom. They were stranded, broke and without resources in a strange land.

Then came the day when an unheard-of tragedian in an unheard-of town pulled his pistol and snapped it in the direction of a pair of personages. Sarajevo was as tanky as Ebensville, but the time had come when it was to take its place with Waterloo and Thermopylae and other way stations and tank towns among the similes of the world. With McHarter and Murphy the name came to have almost the significance of Ebensville.

Soon a great unrest began to surge over London, especially among the hordes of American theatrical folk there. The successful were besieging steamship offices for portions of deck space, and the unsuccessful, who had been laboring for a year to gain the price of passage, suddenly grasped the charitable possibilities that lay in the American consulate.

McHarter and Murphy, Monarchs of Mirth, decided to stay awhile, shrewdly estimating that the departure of so many would leave less competition in the theatrical field. They suggested to each other that a war-worried land would surely welcome such rib-tickling jests as they purveyed. They were wrong.

It was surprising how quickly London became belligerent. Every able bodied man was importuned on every side to join the colors. Ridicule and contempt were openly expressed for the man who did not wear a uniform or a recruiter's ribbon. McHarter and Murphy were in the prime of their lives when their physical perfections drew too much attention their way.

At the close of a week whose days had been filled with unsuccessful efforts to obtain bookings and when nearly every agent had accompanied his refusal with gratuitous advice to join the army, and when every appearance on the streets had been the signal for taunts and insults and shouts of "slacker!" McHarter and Murphy took stock of their pence and possibilities and voted to enlist.

"We'll have to do it sooner or later if we stay here," said McHarter. "So let's do it now."

"It'll be an adventure and maybe we can get some good press stuff out of it," said Murphy. "Maybe we can get out in time to beat it back to the stage and frame a war act."

"It's three meals a day, anyhow," said McHarter.

"I need shoes, too," said Murphy.

So the two of them, victims of circumstances, opportunists, unused to more severe toil than the slapstick comedy their act imposed, betook them to a hurried and none-too-gracious recruiting officer and were hastily accepted as servants to fight for His Majesty.

England was in great haste just then to form an army that might be used like so many bags of sand to stop a leak. The rat-colored hordes were trooping across Belgium and the human bags of sand must be heaped along the channel coast dunes to protect the Snug Little Isle. Training in the camp where McHarter and Murphy were sent was perfunctory and almost brutal in its severity. In a brief time the Monarchs of Mirth were soldiers of a sort and off to the wars.

Huddled in their small burrow in that miry desolation that was Flanders, in a sleety, rainy, foggy October, McHarter and Murphy were filled with repinings. The conduct of the war did not suit

them at all. It was too cold for one thing, and too muddy for another. They were bitter and complaining pacifists, sick of their bargain and hungry for return to the lazy and lenient life they had known so long. This lying in a lousy pit with rodents playing tag over the body was an indignity far worse than the lack of appreciation that had driven them from the stage.

Then, too, the Monarchs of Mirth were scared—just plain sick with fear. The constant rumbling of the guns, the inevitable spatter of a bullet in the mud every time a target was exposed from the trench, the terrifyingly frequent processions of stretcher bearers, the chill and the dirt, kept their chicken hearts in constant and torturing qualms. They were so frightened that they were ill; nauseated; their stomachs contracted and always feeling like cold lumps of lead in their bodies. Their terror was abject, unashamed, paralyzing. They clung together and shook in unison in their tremendous palsy. They were so frightened that frequent vomiting spasms overtook them.

These two who had known nothing but a soft life and the security of theaters and warm places were thrown into the very heart of the caldron where horror was brewing, and they were infected with the awful virus that saps and robs men of all their strength, mental, moral and physical. They were no heroes nor desired to be, and they cursed the expediency that had sent them to sign their attestation papers in that encouraging recruiting office. Nor did succeeding days mitigate their dreads. They did not become inured to the terrors all about them; rather, their disease grew and became chronic in its virulence. Their funk was too disgusting to excite aught but pity in their fellows of the trenches, and their officers were brutal in attempts to effect some cure. Green and white about the lips, staring about the eyes, McHarter and Murphy trembled in an unrelenting delirium of fear.

The checker-board shifting of men in the game whose goal was Calais found their company directly facing the salient of an enemy wedge whose wings had been forced back by British pressure. It was militarily expedient that this salient should be taken; the importance of its capture was greatly considered. So orders were given and plans were made and men were warned that a sortie was to be attempted.

McHarter and Murphy were lectured upon the great duty and privilege that was to be theirs by a disgusted officer, and stood mouthing and swallowing hard at the excretions that fear salivated in their throats, reduced to sheer idiocy by their terror. The officer wished he might leave them behind, and assigned two of their file mates to watch and punish them if they faltered.

Every man in that company knew that it was to be a costly sortie that night; every one prepared to pay his share of the cost. It is doubtful if either McHarter or Murphy considered such a possibility as sudden death; they were too frightened to separate abstractions from the complexity of horror that gripped them. The immensity of their fright overwhelmed any efforts to concentrate thought upon components of the terror.

It is when the mind is surcharged with one predominant emotion that the reflex or subconscious intelligence plays strange tricks; men grow phrenetic and the motor nerves pass from control and go to performing unthought-of things. The involuntary dementia reverts to habitual experiences for its impulses, and the body acts without consent or sanction of the brain. So completely did fear dominate the brains of McHarter and Murphy that all other emotions and impulses were left free to run rampant and uncontrolled and to direct movements for which the fright-crazed intelligence had no place or time.

Perhaps it was the flares and star shells that did it. Perhaps it was because the edge of the enemy trench all ablaze with lights looked in a weird way like the footlights of a stage. Perhaps it was because that muddy stretch between the lines was so sprayed with light that it bore a likeness to the radiant arc of a theater's proscenium. Something at least sent a hint to the fear-flooded brains of McHarter and Murphy that in turn sent their subconscious intelligences groping back to a best-remembered habit.

Over the parapet went the British company while the enemy sent frantic bursts of light into the night, the better to direct their deadly fire. The two file mates who had been designated to see that McHarter and Murphy did not fail in their duty, cursed and kicked as they heaved the two drooling, chattering cowards from the trench. Then it was every man for himself, and the devil take whomever Fate and the enemy picked for a target.

Underneath the whimpering shells that flew overhead in a protecting barrage and dodging the smaller missiles that whistled so cheerily past their ears, the Tommies crouched and ducked and ran and stumbled and fell. They faced a flying wall of lead and sought insecure shelter in oozy holes and behind once-human lumps that littered the field. The sortie was like to become a failure until the withering artillery could dissuade the enemy defense.

Out there in the flare-lighted field—so like the arc of a theater's stage—where the rocket-studded edge of the enemy line was the footlights and where the star shells were borders and spots, the Monarchs of Mirth went stumbling, gibbering, crying. Then their subconscious minds took charge of things and gave the cue to undirected muscles. They who had been given the hook in Ebensville and hooted from Pennyfields' crudest music hall and had been forced from the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder, had put their feet back on the rung and were climbing again. The call boy of their reflex selves sent them on the stage again.

With his gun clubbed and swung like a slapstick, McHarter began to belabor his partner, who mouthed and chattered rib-tickling jests hoary with age. Through the din of the whining shells overhead and the bursting shells underfoot came snatches of the comedy that had convulsed audiences of a decade before.

"—noodle, poodle and kioodle."

Slap over Murphy's muddy back went McHarter's gun butt.

"—feels so good when you stop."

Slap went the gun on Murphy's anterior.

"—cursed the day I was born."

Slap on the posterior.

The astonished enemy forgot to pull triggers of rapid-spitting machine guns and rifles, and equally amazed Tommies lifted their heads from holes, unmindful of the fair targets they presented.

"—my mother I never would be an actor," McHarter fed the lines.

"—kept your word," came in broken German dialect from Murphy, true to his cue.

Slap, slap, slap, went the gun butt on various portions of the comedian's anatomy.

Then Murphy took the cue for his awkward dance and moved nearer the footlights to position.

"—taught you how to dance?" came the tag end of McHarter's question.

"—two step-sisters." Murphy shouted the point of the jest.

The dance began. McHarter swung his partner in burlesque pirouettes and then released him to fall clumsily and splashily in the mud. Nearer and nearer to the flaring footlights of the enemy trench bumped and tumbled the Monarchs of Mirth, and not a leaden pellet stayed them.

With his gun butt McHarter now and then thwacked his partner's shoulders and Murphy bounced and rolled in the mud with grotesque evolutions.

No other war had seen a sight like this, and friends and enemies alike gasped and stood motionless at the effrontery of the thing.

The act was nearing its climacteric finale when Murphy should go rolling and bumping from the stage. McHarter held his gun poised to wield it in the final blow that should propel the dancer into the wings.

Slap! The gun butt fell on Murphy's front and right over the flaring line of footlights tumbled the comedian. McHarter followed with his clubbed gun. In the trench the amazed Germans stood staring, powerless to touch the maniacs who had thus come.

A great roar of applause followed the exit of the Monarchs of Mirth, and from oozy holes and behind once-human lumps sprang the British. The enemy in the trench were too much concerned in the apparition that had come to them to concentrate their fire. Murphy had heard the roar of applause and turned, as had been his habit for so many years, to bow acceptance of the ovation. A German attempted to hold McHarter back from his bow, but was felled with a vicious blow from the clubbed gun.

Then an avalanche of Tommies fell upon the salient trench and in hand-to-hand struggle subdued the wonder-struck enemy. McHarter and Murphy stood upon the dimming parapet, bowing and scraping toward the audience that their subconsciousness told them was seated out there in the blackness. When they were pulled back into the pit by their laughing, cheering comrades they were overtaken again with an ague of fear and collapsed into two inert and gibbering cowards.

Because that salient trench was of great importance in the game that was being played with Calais as its goal, the exploit of McHarter and Murphy came to have a deal of attention paid it and was written down in many reports and orders. After it had been told and retold so many times that it came to have many variations from the original, it came to the ears of men who had authority to confer honors upon heroes, and they, all unconscious of the reflex and subconscious motives behind the deed, hastily arranged that the Monarchs of Mirth should be decorated by His Majesty's proxy and have their names writ down upon the nation's honor rolls as saving heroes.

Certainly someone deserved a medal for that night's work and it is impossible to pin decorations on subconscious intelligences.

Grateful Belgium took cognizance of the part the two human sand bags had played in checking the rat-colored tide and directed that other medals should be placed on the heroic breasts; and France, in no way to be behind in gratitude, sent her cross of war.

The feat that had been done was told and told again until it reached the avid columns of the press, and there the word-mongers, jealous of dramatic and picturesque effects and careless of hampering facts, embroidered the tale and replaced exact details with such arabesques of imagination that make good stories.

In time the narrative, all shorn of truth, but carrying the essential facts that three grateful nations had greatly honored two heroes, came to America and the theatrical journals printed a fulsome notice that said in part:

"McHarter and Murphy, long headliner favorites on the American stage, and who were successfully touring British vaudeville circuits at the outbreak of the war, have been decorated for conspicuous bravery by Great Britain, France and Belgium. It is hoped by American managers that the heroes may be induced to sign contracts here immediately they are released from military duty."

Because their fright disease did not subside and made them unfit as soldiers and dangerous to the morale of their

comrades, army surgeons saw to it that McHarter and Murphy were invalided back to Blighty, and because they were of absolutely no further use as human sandbags they obtained their discharges from the army.

It was not long before the electric lights of theaters whose very name upon a contract was guarantee of an act's excellence began blazing the names of McHarter and Murphy, Monarchs of Mirth, and their act appeared on programs in the choice position that is accorded only to the theatrically famous. When the stage hands set forth the letters that announced their appearance audiences rose to cheer again.

With medals and ribbons pinned over the fronts of their plaided and striped costumes, McHarter and Murphy began climbing the theatrical ladder once more. Super-conscientious managers billed their act as a revival; but the hoary old jokes and the slapstick comedy needed only the bronze crosses that heroes wear once more to "knock 'em cold" out in front.

And after a long time the fame of the team of heroes trickled back to Ebensville, and the theatrically-wise of the tank town remembered that the opera house had once been honored by the appearance there of the highest-salaried team in vaudeville, McHarter and Murphy, Monarchs of Mirth.

Boswell's original proof-sheets for his "Life of Doctor Johnson" have just sold for $2,200. Nowadays the printers charge more than that for correcting anybody's proofs.—*New York Evening Sun.*

From an advertisement of the American Automobile Company of America, August, 1899: "It can be made ready to run at any time in less than ten minutes. . . . The fuel is obtainable in almost any town at 7 cents per gallon."

SENTIMENT AND SWINE

By RAMSEY BENSON

MISS DUNLEVY had come up to St. Louis to buy hats for the largest establishment in Hopscotch, Oklahoma. Hopscotch, if you don't happen to know about it already, is in the oil fields. Money doesn't exactly grow on the bushes down there, but it gushes up out of the ground. Jobbers in St. Louis weren't overlooking Hopscotch.

But Miss Dunlevy. When country merchants sent men up to St. Louis to buy hats and things jobbers knew just how to show them a good time. The town was full of entertainment for men; the streets of Cairo and the dubious delights of the gay night life never failed to refresh their provincial souls. But women presented difficulties. They had sensibilities of a mysterious and baffling nature—such sensibilities, in other words, that it was quite as easy to displease a woman by taking her to see too little as by taking her to see too much. Jobbers by no means begrudged the money. No matter what it might cost, the outlay was in a very real sense bread cast upon the waters. Nevertheless these women presented difficulties.

The problem had more and more to be faced, however, and Spurvin-Todd accounted themselves lucky in having Jack Hornell to bear the brunt. Hornell was gifted and the salary he earned by his gifts was big enough to be split up with Uncle Sam as often as the income tax fell due. He wasn't married, and that circumstance cut down his exemption, but, on the other hand, if he had been married he might not have been worth so much to Spurvin-Todd. But whether or no, when Miss Dunlevy showed up at the manager's office the manager sent for Jack.

That was where they first met. The manager introduced them and fell into the background. Jack Hornell stood in need of no instructions. He understood that nothing was too good for Miss Dunlevy, of Hopscotch. Incidentally he was to sell her a stock of hats, because Spurvin-Todd weren't in wholesale millinery for their health, but the main thing was to see that her hours of ease didn't hang heavy on her hands.

He began with a touch of business, however. Would Miss Dunlevy like to spend an hour or so inspecting the new styles? She would.

Only the very rare woman could try on two or three dozen hats in the presence of a man of Jack Hornell's insight without giving him some notion of her habit of thought. If Miss Dunlevy was the sort to show what kind she was under the test, that was precisely what he wanted to know, and if she wasn't he wanted to know that too.

He perceived at once that she was different. She was more like an innocent, impulsive schoolgirl than a buyer of hats. Almost the first thing, she threw herself on the firm's mercy.

"I don't know a thing about hats," she avowed. "I mean hats in the mass. Of course I can pick out a particular hat and say whether it's pretty or not, but when it comes to the selection of a stock —Mr. Hornell, do you suppose the house would select for me? They know better than I do what a stock of hats ought to be in a town like Hopscotch."

That was as good as to bid Spurvin-Todd to go ahead and cheat her if they wished. Of course they didn't wish. Of course it was really the prudent thing for Miss Dunlevy to do. But it was what few buyers from the provinces did. It made her out different.

Hornell was uncommonly impressed. He was conscious of a curiosity not strictly professional. Indeed he found himself so far off the professional beaten track as to wonder if Miss Dunlevy was much too old to be a schoolgirl, and being that far off he went farther and decided that she wasn't. Another thing—she was much prettier after she had tried on two or three dozen hats than she had been out there in the manager's office. . She had big round eyes and a trick of opening them very wide as she listened, and she was extraordinarily ready to listen, by the way. Hornell thought of it as a trick, and then he wasn't sure—it was almost too delicious to be a trick. Anyhow it was like nothing he had ever met with. He was struck by it right at the start, and it grew on him so rapidly that before the hats had mounted up into the third dozen it was giving him a feeling of uncertainty in the region of his heart. Will you consider that symptom? Hornell considered it and tried not to see Miss Dunlevy's eyes any more except in a business way—with no great success, however. He was obliged at length to ask himself what he was about, but even that precaution didn't save him from observing Miss Dunlevy's trick of opening her eyes, if it was a trick.

After about an hour she yawned. "Wouldn't you like to see a ball game?" Hornell asked her.

Miss Dunlevy clasped her hands. "Ty Cobb!" she breathed, ecstatically.

"No, the Tigers were here last week. Washington plays the Browns to-day," Hornell replied.

"Washington! Will Johnson pitch?"

"I'm sorry to say that Johnson pitched yesterday."

"So he did, and shut the Browns out with two scratch hits. I read about it. Well, never mind who pitches. I never saw a big league game. I'm just dying to!"

They journeyed out to the park and sat through seven innings of a very bushy exhibition of the national pastime. It took half a dozen pitchers two mortal hours to push the game so far. But Hornell didn't find himself minding. Miss Dunlevy kept the batteries of her big eyes trained on him pretty constantly and he forgot to be discontented with the sorry playing. He felt himself being shot to pieces by inches, but somehow it didn't seem to hurt. He ought to have been terrified but he wasn't. He didn't ask himself what he was about for the reason that he only knew too well. He was falling in love.

Toward six o'clock Miss Dunlevy yawned once more. Hornell endeavored to form within himself the hope that she would decline his invitation to dinner. Professionally, of course, it was his business to wish her to accept, but personally he ought to be hoping that she would decline. He wasn't, however. He could muster no such hope. He asked her to have dinner with him at Frontenac's, and when she answered that she would his very soul sang for joy. He didn't have to pretend to be glad. He was glad—tickled to death, with all the implications.

Perhaps you know Frontenac's. It is neither a tea room nor a cabaret—more of a cross between the two. There is no dancing there, but the band plays catchy classics and the service is truly wonderful.

She implored Hornell to order for her and he ordered planked shad. Planked shad was a specialty at Frontenac's. Miss Dunlevy went into raptures. "Oh, do they bring on the plank with the fish?" she cried, and opened her eyes about a mile wide.

Miss Dunlevy made it clear that no

matter how she might seem to others she didn't consider herself an innocent abroad. If she chose to rely upon the mercy of jobbers in the selection of a stock of hats, that might be a foxy play rather than a confession of ignorance, and anyway, hats aside, she talked like a seasoned mariner in the sea of affairs. She knew, or thought she knew, the winds and tides which affected navigation there.

Especially she had much to say about investments. The planked shad gave way to squabs, and over the squabs Miss Dunlevy grew confidential: "I want to tell you about the snap I've got my own money in."

"Pray do!" entreated Hornell.

Her big eyes poured a broadside across the table and along with it she made the disclosure in a single word:

"Hogs!"

"Hogs!" repeated Hornell, uncertainly.

"Hogs! Top pork is twenty dollars a hundred on the hoof and going up. What's more, it will keep right on going up. Nothing can stop it. It can't go back in the face of the shortage—that's a cinch. Hogs are the goods. They are fat and fat is going to be scarce for years to come. Hogs are a sure thing, as sure as anything can be in a world of uncertainty."

Hornell listened. It seemed to be necessary for him to say something, and the first thing he thought of was a mild objection. "Corn," he pointed out, "is around two dollars a bushel."

"Corn," replied Miss Dunlevy, serenely, "doesn't interest us a bit. It doesn't enter into our calculations at any point. When I say us I mean the Panhandle Feeds. That's the stock with the golden edge. Let me tell you!"

Hornell let her, by all means. It was a joy to hear her talk, to feel the flash of her eyes, to see the color come and go in her face. Hornell wouldn't have her stop telling him for the world.

Nor was she in the least inclined to do so. Being in such wise started, she kept right on with her confidences. "We don't feed a kernel of corn," she informed him, "not a solitary kernel. We feed tankage. Most likely you don't know about tankage. Well, it's meat stuff—old scraps ground up and dried. It smells dreadfully, worse than the fanciest imported cheese you ever ate, but somehow the hogs like it, and it certainly does make good pork; the very best, solid and sweet. It beats corned pork to a fare-you-well; everybody says so.

"I know what you're thinking; you're thinking that meat is high, too. So it is—most meat; but not the meat we use. Panhandle Feeds are different.

"Burros, in short. Do you know about burros, how plentiful they are out west? Maybe you don't. Maybe you don't know what a burro is—the little donkey that weighs about five hundred pounds and carries fifteen hundred pounds on his back. When that country was new burros did about all the fetching and carrying. They'd go anywhere and pack everything, from a sack of beans to a sawmill. But now that gasoline has come they're not so useful. Their day has gone by and the demand for them has fallen off so that they can be had very cheap.

"They're our meat. We buy the burros for a song, as you may say, and grind them up into tankage for our hogs. They make dandy tankage.

"Now about the hogs. The hogs are Arkansas razorbacks. They grow up wild down there in the sticks and we buy them in poor condition—just skin and bones. They're nothing but the framework, and the farmers don't ask much for them. We've got men out buying the razorbacks and driving them overland to our ranch. That's the beauty of the razorback; he's light on his feet and you can drive him twenty miles a day and not hurt him a bit. Where we drive the hogs overland we don't have to split up our profits with the railroads, and what's

more we don't attract so much attention. We can't patent our process and we're not anxious to advertise it; too many would go and do likewise.

"We own fifty shares of stock—mother and I. There's just us two in the family, you know. We paid twenty dollars a share or one thousand dollars in all and it took every cent we could rake and scrape. Mortgaged the roof over our heads. My mother doesn't understand about business. She relies on my judgment."

Miss Dunlevy leaned her elbows on the table. That was Hopscotch manners rather than St. Louis manners, but Hornell wasn't the least bit revolted. He leaned his elbows on the table as well. Manners or what not, it brought their faces pretty close together—so close that he could see that she wore no atom of powder and that her complexion was without a flaw. Hornell detested powder and he esteemed a flawless complexion above all things.

He caught the full voltage of her eyes at short range. "Wonderful!" he exclaimed. For her own sake he could be less than frank with her. Her tale, so glowingly told, conjured up before his mind two visions and neither of these did he care to reveal. "Wonderful!" he repeated and that was sufficient comment, and in virtue of its ambiguity as truthful as need be.

Hornell's first vision, to take them up in order, was the vision of Panhandle Feeds going to smash. He hadn't the faintest doubt that it was destined to go to smash. It had all the earmarks. By every token it was just that kind of enterprise, a swindle deftly designed to make victims of such as Miss Dunlevy and her mother. More or less distinctly he could recall having read about divers fraudulent concerns which had worked that very string, a concern in Pittsburg, particularly, which the department of justice had lately smoked out. Of course Miss Dunlevy was entirely mistaken in thinking the proposal to feed hogs that way was new. It was an old story and often used as a means of selling blue sky to the unwary.

His other vision had to do with a matter of ten thousand dollars which he had himself laid by. Hornell differed from most young men with big salaries; he knew how to save.

You may or may not understand his position. If you have ever been under the spell yourself you won't wonder at anything, and if you haven't you are as much entitled to your doubts as any other uninformed person. Hornell's head whirled strangely, but all the while a very definite purpose was taking form in his mind. Men are the creatures of their moods and his mood was all for doing the knightly, chivalrous thing. He saw Miss Dunlevy about to be engulfed in the treacherous waters of speculation and his resolution was taken.

He had need to proceed craftily, however. Since she suspected nothing of her danger she mightn't understand a too direct method of rescue. "Is there any Panhandle stock in the market?" he inquired.

"Not a dollar!" replied Miss Dunlevy and his heart ached to think how badly fooled she was. "We sold just enough to get started. It didn't take much; our plant is nothing but a few old sheds out in New Mexico where we make the tankage and some patches of rocks down in the Ozarks where we feed the hogs."

Hornell's face fell just to the extent he could make it fall. He was acting a part. He wished to give her the impression that he was keen to invest in Panhandle and that was why he asked if stock was to be bought in the market. He knew perfectly well it was, but he knew, too, that Miss Dunlevy believed it wasn't. Victims of a blue-sky swindle always believed that their stock was invariably part of a very small issue.

So, adroitly led up to, the knightly thing got itself done. Hornell played his part

so well that the bargain was struck before they left the table and the upshot was that his account at the bank was exhausted by a check which Miss Dunlevy took back to Hopscotch with her, and the next mail from that favored town brought her certificates of stock in Panhandle Feeds, duly signed over to him.

Ten thousand, for what had cost one —could anything be knightlier?

They parted at the steps of the Pullman which was going to take Miss Dunlevy home. Spurvin-Todd had their fat order and Jack's work was well done, but there rose a lump in his throat that bothered him outrageously. The easiest of talkers ordinarily, he stammered and stumbled in a manner not less than pitiful when he asked Miss Dunlevy if he mightn't run down to Hopscotch one of these days. "I want to get better acquainted with you—and your mother!" he protested, with perfect sincerity though imperfect ease.

"Oh, do—by all means!" she urged, and glowed killingly, and gave him her hand.

He held it just an instant. He gazed soulfully down into her wonderful eyes, and deep spake unto deep. She flushed more than a little. If she didn't understand there was nothing in signs.

Hornell was vastly lifted up. He bulked a heroic figure in his own eyes that day and during some days thereafter. He took much delight in thinking of what he had done but even more in thinking of what he was going to do. Still, though he built castles in the air, a degree of prudence entered into their construction. He would run down to Hopscotch; but he would await the psychological moment, and the psychological moment he conceived to be when Panhandle Feeds should have blown up. With Panhandle Feeds gone to smash the danger from which he had snatched Miss Dunlevy and her mother would plainly appear and with it the quality of his chivalry. That was his program; he would possess his soul in what patience he might and wait until Panhandle Feeds should have definitely blown up.

It was June, the month of romance, when he took leave of Miss Dunlevy at the steps of her Pullman. Early in July, the month when dogs go mad, the mails brought Hornell a letter that just about bowled him off his pins. It was from Panhandle Feeds and it contained a check for five hundred dollars, "in payment," it explained, "of dividend of ten dollars per share declared June 30."

In August Panhandle wrote twice. The first letter remitted twelve hundred fifty, the second two thousand dollars, in payment of dividends.

Seventy-five dollars per share in two months.

Equal to four hundred fifty a year.

Making a share of stock worth anywhere from six thousand dollars up.

Fifty shares of stock—

Hornell didn't run down to Hopscotch. The dividends sent the psychological moment glimmering, and they made his chivalry look a poor thing. So far from having rescued an innocent girl and her mother from the deadly whirlpool of speculation he stood in the position of having taken advantage of their innocence to despoil them of their holdings in a veritable Golconda. It made Hornell sick to think of his chivalry and the figure he had so lately deemed heroic.

Of course he would return the stock to Miss Dunlevy; as an honest man he could think of nothing less. But how? Here was delicate business—a false step and the fat would be in the fire beyond recovery. Once more it was the chivalrous thing he wished to do and it was clearly the chivalrous thing to return the stock, but the more he considered ways and means the less he could make up his mind.

August, then September, and Septem-

ber brought the usual swarm of women to buy hats for the winter trade, Miss Dunlevy with the rest. She headed straight for Spurvin-Todd's and she asked for Hornell the first thing. She insisted upon Hornell, in fact. It developed that she owned the business back in Hopscotch now, so that she was buying for herself and when she insisted upon Hornell it had to be Hornell.

But she was in no hurry to talk about hats. "Let's go out and see the Tigers eat up the Browns!" she proposed, gaily. "Understand—I pay. You're my guest to-day," she warned him.

They went out. Ty Cobb fattened his towering averages with three doubles, stole four bases and fielded impossible flies till Miss Dunlevy lost the count. She went wild with delight, screamed herself hoarse and split her gloves clapping her hands. "Isn't he perfectly gorgeous!" she panted.

The game left nothing to be desired but it by no means exhausted Miss Dunlevy's hospitality. "Now for Frontenac's and some more of that planked shad!" she cried, when the last man was out.

At the table, while the shad was being planked, Hornell owned up; he couldn't stand the strain any longer and he blurted out everything there and then; that is, everything about Panhandle Feeds. Miss Dunlevy listened and her eyes grew incredibly wide. "In two months—seventy-five dollars a share!" she crowed, joyously.

Hornell stared at her so comically that she burst out laughing. "Oh, bully!" she protested. "That sure takes a load off my conscience. I came up to St. Louis on purpose to make my confession to you and I was wondering how I should go about it."

"Confession!" gasped Hornell, weakly.

"Just that. Do you know, I thought I was handing you a gold brick when I sold you that Panhandle stock?"

No—Hornell didn't know that. Distinctly not.

"Well, it's the disgraceful truth. I bought the stock in the first place of a smooth chap who talked me out of my senses. He made me believe in the investment, but the minute his back was turned I began to get cold feet. I read things in the papers about other hog concerns that had gone bump and pretty soon my shoes felt like they had chunks of ice in them. I figured that mother and I stood to lose everything and I was blue enough. But on the way up to St. Louis I got to studying, and it came over me all at once that I might unload on somebody. I had a notion that St. Louis was full of easy marks with money to throw to the birds and I just made up my mind to try the trick. I picked you for the victim and the rest is history."

Hornell felt better but not altogether well. "Of course you must take the stock back. I'm a robber until you do," he insisted.

"Of course I'll do nothing of the sort. I can't. I've spent the money. It bought the shop," she answered.

"Never mind about the money. Take the stock back and say nothing about the money."

"Then I'd be the robber."

"But you must."

"Positively not."

They confronted each other across the table. Hornell looked into the depths of her big eyes and became desperate. "Then I propose, by way of compromise," he quavered, "that you marry me."

Her eyes fell and when she lifted them they were luminous with a witching light.

"A compromise," she cooed, very softly, "is always worth considering."

In a public place like Frontenac's there wasn't much else they could do or say, but they ate their shad with a zest for which neither the noble fish nor the exquisite cookery was responsible.

THE EPIC OF OLD CARK

By HORACE J. SIMPSON

THIS is really the tragedy of Three Rills Cove—of its premature birth as a select resort by the salt sea, of its blasted infancy, and of its early and lamented demise. Perhaps though, it would be a little unfair to its fathers to speak of Three Rills Cove as dead; let us compromise and call it a case of suspended animation. For possibly when there lives no longer an obstinate and artful Old Cark—

But let us get back to the beginning.

Clamfleet, juxta-mare, had outlived its day. Men of clear vision had foreseen the setting of its sun behind the mountain of a railway company's avarice when the first cheap excursion had turned a thousand trippers loose in its select streets. When a short-sighted town council decided to allow the reek of fried fish and the glare of three-penny cinemas on the very Marine Parade, Ossa was heaped on Pelion and, as a select resort for the great middle classes, Clamfleet was no more.

Mr. Chaplin Church, a town councillor, who had hotly opposed the transportation to Clamfleet of London's back streets in bulk, convened a public meeting and told the townspeople to their faces that they possessed less imagination than the municipal steam-roller.

"Good for trade, is it?" he roared at them. "Let me tell you that a bigger turnover doesn't necessarily mean a larger profit. . . . All right! Go on attracting the riff-raff of the metropolis with your cheap trips and your cinemas and your fried fish. Make Clamfleet the slum she deserves to be. In less than a dozen years Three Rills Cove will be proudly wearing the mantle of prosperity that Clamfleet has been blind enough to discard. Three Rills Cove! That's the name of the place that in a few years will have taken its position as the most select seaside resort within easy reach of London!"

Clamfleet sniggered. It remembered that, in the days before Mr. Chaplin Church took so burning an interest in local affairs, he had been a speculative builder. It remembered that he had bought some marsh land by the shore at Three Rills Cove; that he had put up a score of bungalows there; and that those same bungalows were still standing, empty and decayed. For Three Rills Cove was seven miles from Clamfleet, which was the terminus of the railway, and the roads were impossible.

So Clamfleet sniggered again, and went home.

"All right!" Mr. Chaplin Church told his wife in bed that night. "Let 'em snigger. A hundred thousand pounds invested in Three Rills Cove—and nobody above a costermonger will ever spend a holiday at Clamfleet again. I'll show 'em."

"Chaplin," she demanded, thoroughly alarmed, "you aren't mad enough to throw away any more money over that forsaken place, I hope?"

"Who's talking of throwing money away?" he snorted. "I shall invest it—and invest it in the best and biggest thing that ever happened my way. Don't you worry. Three Rills Cove will come into its own. When next season opens, it will have its first-class hotel, two score

or more attractive villa residences, its golf links, and its tennis courts. The season after, visitors will find the accommodations and the attractions trebled. In a few years more, no place on the coast will be able to hold a candle to it; everybody who is anybody will spend their holidays at Three Rills Cove."

Mrs. Chaplin Church was converted. Being an excellent wife, she never persisted in throwing cold water over any enthusiasm of her husband's. Once she had heard a street-corner orator assert that mighty empires had been built on the flimsy foundations of men's dreams. At any rate, Chaplin's dream was modest by comparison. He did not propose to build an empire, but a select resort for holiday makers. She dropped off to sleep and dreamed that he had done it.

Mr. Chaplin Church was not a man to allow grass to grow when once he had made up his mind to do a thing. Indeed, many a street of villas at Clamfleet and elsewhere testified to his dislike of growing grass where bricks and mortar could be profitably cultivated instead. Early next morning he had an interview with Messrs. Lone & Deeds, solicitors, with the result that the title and the amount of capital of the company for the development of Three Rills Cove were decided upon there and then.

In six weeks from that morning, the Select Resorts Syndicate, Limited, drafted a regiment of workmen and much material to the Cove. The decayed bungalows were demolished, the foundations of a commodious and splendid hotel and of twenty attractive villas were started. Fearful and wonderful slashes were made in the flat dreariness of the landscape to provide future visitors to Three Rills with recreation on select golf links and tennis courts. In short, the wonted silence and solitude were invaded by a builder's yard run mad.

Nobody minded. There was nobody at Three Rills to mind. Nobody lived there except Old Cark—and he didn't mind. On the contrary, he welcomed the invasion. It was a splendid thing for him; he had never had such a time in his life. He now sold more cooked cockles and clams in a week than he had formerly sold in six months, and without the trouble of taking them to Clamfleet.

Those carpenters and bricklayers and navvies liked nothing better than to see Old Cark stagger aboard the rotten old boat which had been moored for forty years in the middle one of the three rills from which the cove took its name. Generous chaps they were. There was a canteen on the job, and they treated the old clam-digger to as much drink as he could carry—and more.

All that winter the marshlands echoed with the ring of trowels and the bang of hammers on rafters and floors. A brand new town welcomed the spring with brick-red smiles and the breath of shavings and new mortar. Later, on pantechnicon vans rumbled along the fresh-metalled roads from Clamfleet and deposited heaps of furniture at the doors of the imposing hotel and at most of the attractive villas. Later still, yet before the holiday season had well commenced, smart motor char-a-bancs awaited the express trains—not the cheap excursions—at the terminus and conveyed well-dressed and obviously superior passengers to the splendid accommodations and select attractions offered by Three Rills Cove.

Mr. Chaplin Church and his co-directors often awaited the arrival of the smart char-a-bancs with a personal welcome for the visitors, so proud were they of having converted dreary marshlands to an up-to-date resort for the better classes, in a few months. As soon as the season commenced, all building operations were suspended and Three Rills Cove swept and garnished for its guests. Nothing was allowed to mar the comforts of the select people whom discreet advertising had attracted there.

To be sure, Old Cark caused a little

unpleasantness at first. On the day of the opening of the Hotel de Luxe he shambled straight into the luxurious lounge and importuned a party of ladies there to buy his cooked cockles and clams. He was sternly warned that he must never commit the unpardonable sin again, and conducted outside. In fact, Mr. Chaplin Church hinted strongly that the sooner he took his rotten old boat and his disreputable self from Three Rills Cove, the better it would be for everybody. However, the smart people who stayed at the Hotel de Luxe seemed amused rather than annoyed by the vagaries of the old scoundrel whose only home was the ancient craft moored in the rill opposite the main entrance. And so Old Cark was allowed to remain unmolested—for a time.

It was when warm weather set in that the real trouble commenced. It has been said that the new resort owed its name to the presence, in the vicinity, of three rills. They intersected an expanse of salterns at the head of the cove, and meandered from the seawall down to low-water mark, draining the low marshlands of storm water. In the middle rill, which was in places fifty yards wide, Old Cark's boat, the Hornet, had squatted many a year, only lifting from her mud bed at spring tides. On each side lay vast heaps of shells, the refuse of almost a century's clam digging and mussel and cockle gathering; for Old Cark had known no other occupation in all his seventy years, and it had been his father's profession before him. There was a certain effluvium from the shells when the sun played warm upon them; and that, combined with the odor of shellfish cooked once or twice a week in the old Hornet's cabin, offended the delicate nostrils of the guests of the Hotel de Luxe, and they complained to the suave, immaculate manager. He in turn carried their complaint to Mr. Chaplin Church, who went to Old Cark, and peremptorily demanded that the nuisance be abated.

"Oh!" said Old Cark, puffing a cloud from a noisome black pipe into the gentleman's eyes. "So that's the lay of the land, is it? And who might you be, Mister Jerry-builder?"

"Don't be foolish!" snapped Mr. Chaplin Church. "This nuisance must be removed. I'll see that the shells are carted away—though I'm not sure but what I ought to charge the cost of the job to you—but you will have to move your old boat yourself. If you must cook clams and cockles and other offensive things, you must do it at a decent distance from other people's noses. You understand me? You and your old boat must clear out. I'll give you till high-water to-morrow afternoon. If you don't shift them, you will be shifted."

If Old Cark was upset by the stern order, he showed it strangely. He removed his evil smelling pipe, tucked it away in the folds of his grease-smeared jumper, and burst into a cackling guffaw.

Indignant Mr. Chaplin Church strode away, firmly resolved that, for the old scoundrel's insolence, he would show no leniency.

"Here!" called Old Cark. "Come back. Let's talk this out."

Mr. Chaplin Church was at heart a man of peace. If that old scoundrel and his rotten boat could be gotten rid of without fuss, so much the better. He went back.

"Well," he said, "what is it?"

He ought to have been warned by the sneering curl of Old Cark's upper lip, but he wasn't.

"You built all these houses and that slap-up public-house, didn't ye, Mister Mortarhod? Reckon to make Three Rills Cove a better place than Clamfleet, don't ye? Ye wasn't asked to, was ye? I didn't send for ye to come and build a town close to my old boat, did I?"

Mr. Chaplin Church was still inclined to be pacific.

"Oh, come now, Cark!" said he. "You are talking nonsense."

"Am I, Mister Whitewash-bucket? Not half as much nonsense as your gas about shifting me and my old boat out o' this rill. You jest try shifting us and see."

"You mean to tell me that you are going to be foolishly obstinate? I'd hate to have to resort to force, you know. And I'm afraid that if the police do come to shift you, and you oppose them, they won't be any too gentle about it."

"The police!" sneered Old Cark. "They got no more power to shift me than you have. The blamed Government itself couldn't do it. When a man's got rights, he's got rights. And I've got the rights o' mooring a craft in this rill and using these salterns for my shells, and so had my father afore me. They come from the lord o' the manor; and ye can't take 'em away, Mister Putty-knife."

Mr. Chaplin Church was very angry; nevertheless, he saw the usefulness of showing the high hand. The old reprobate meant to give trouble, possibly with the idea of inducing a bribe. Well, his peaceable departure would be cheap at a sovereign. Mr. Chaplin Church offered it suavely.

"Garn!" sneered Old Cark. "Go and spend it on drain-pipes. I'd only be robbing ye by taking it; for I could come back when I liked. I tell ye it was left in a will that my father, and his sons, and their sons, forever and ever, have the right of mooring a boat in the middle rill and using the salterns for shell heaps. Ye can't get away from what's put in a will."

Mr. Chaplin Church sighed and departed. It was obvious that the old scoundrel had a bee in his bonnet; otherwise he wouldn't have lived all his life in squalor aboard that rotten old boat, feeding mainly on shellfish, and spending what little he got from the sale of them in getting gloriously drunk.

Mr. Church had a friend to dinner that night, an old gentleman who had lived the whole of his eighty years at Clamfleet. To him he spoke of his trouble with Old Cark.

The old gentleman rubbed his chin.

"Now you mention it," he said, "I remember that he gave Standish a lot of trouble about thirty years ago. You bought the property from Standish's son, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Chaplin Church.

"There was some question about the right of Old Cark to use those salterns," said the native. "I remember that Standish was going to build a house there and use that middle rill as a permanent berth for a small yacht he had, but he discovered that he couldn't legally shift Old Cark and had to abandon the idea."

"Absurd!" said Mr. Chaplin Church. "I bought, not only the marshes, but the salterns and foreshore, right down to low water mark. Next winter we shall convert the sea wall into a smart Marine Parade and build a causeway right across the spot where that old rascal has his heaps of stinking shells. I tell you the whole blessed show is mine, and I can do what I like with it; rather, the Select Resorts Syndicate can."

Notwithstanding his conviction on the point, Mr. Chaplin Church saw Messrs. Lone & Deeds next day and instructed them to look into the matter. His caution was amply justified. Undoubtedly Old Cark had some sort of right to use the rill for his boat and the salterns for his shells. The privilege apparently had been granted to his father for some trivial service by a former lord of the manor. This had been overlooked when the property was conveyed to Mr. Chaplin Church; but Messrs. Lone & Deeds were of the opinion that the old clam-digger could be induced to renounce his rights for quite an insignificant sum down. They would appeal to Old Cark's cupidity.

"Do," said Mr. Chaplin Church. "I'm afraid that if I saw the old rogue again I might lose my temper and spoil things."

So Mr. Jubal Lone went over to Three

Rills Cove, saw Old Cark—and thought he had conquered. The promise of a brand new boat to replace the ancient Hornet appeared to succeed where the blandishment of hard cash failed, but the wily solicitor had been indiscreet enough to slip a half-sovereign into Old Cark's hand to seal the bargain.

It was the possession of so much money that enticed Old Cark to Clamfleet that afternoon and sent him back gloriously drunk. And had not Old Cark been gloriously drunk he would not have pushed his way into the Hotel de Luxe and insisted on being served with a "pot o' four ale."

His request was not granted, but he was taken firmly by his shoulders and put outside by the immaculate manager himself.

"Oh-ho!" gurgled Old Cark. "So that's your little game, Mister Whiteshirt is it? Ye've been put up to this by Mister Jerry-builder Church! I know! All right! You may chuck Old Cark out o' your tin-kettle public-house, but ye'll find it's afore ye bought your shovel to chuck him and his old Hornet out o' that rill! Pull a blamed hornet out of her nest by the sting, would ye? You dam' well try it on!"

And so, when next day Mr. Jubal Lone took to Old Cark a properly-drawn-up document for him to sign, renouncing his rights forever, the solicitor got a set-back.

"When you have signed it," he wheedled, "you may go to Clamfleet and take possession of that brand new smack in Alder's shipyard."

He proffered the use of his fountain pen, which Old Cark seemed inclined to refuse. The old reprobate, after staring at the solicitor keenly, took the lower lash of his right eye between thumb and finger, and pulled it down with vulgar significance.

The solicitor was nettled. But he forced himself to be jocose. "Oh, I know there isn't a speck of green in your eye!" he said. "You want the new boat first? Very well; you shall have her. Come back with me and take possession."

Old Cark sucked furiously at his pipe.

"You hold hard, Mister Six-and-eightpence!" he roared. "What have ye put down on that paper about that new boat? Does it say I can bring her here and cook cockles and clams aboard her? Does it say I can keep on using them salterns for my shells, and stink out that penny public-house?"

The solicitor started. "Oh, come now, Cark! You don't expect Mr. Chaplin Church to make you an unconditional present of that new boat?"

"Him!" the old scoundrel screamed. "I wouldn't expect him to give me the smell of his dinner! But I'll give him the smell o' mine! I'll stink him out—him and his Jerry-built pub! You take that dam' paper back and tell him so!"

And before the crestfallen lawyer was half way back to Clamfleet, there wafted from the cabin of the old Hornet such an overpowering odor of stewing clams that the Hotel de Luxe and the attractive villas had to close all their windows.

"Chuck me and my old boat out of our home, would they!" muttered Old Cark, leaving the clams stewing and stinking on the fire, and shuffling down the mud to dig for more. "Chuck me out o' their stained-glass public-house, would they? Put their silly heads into a hornet's nest, they have! I'll show 'em."

And show 'em he did. For the warmer the weather became, the more shell-fish he cooked. One could not possibly expect people to stay in a hotel with permanently closed windows, any more than one could expect them to go outside and be choked to death by the reek of stewed clams and the effluvium from the heaps of long departed shell-fish. The superior visitors to Three Rills Cove did just what other people with offended nostrils might be expected to do. They held handker-

chiefs to their noses until they got safely away from the nuisance; then called the Cove and the Select Resorts Syndicate, Limited all the bad names they could think of.

The story of Old Cark and his cockles and clams got into the newspapers. People chuckled—and remained content to take it on trust from the pens of descriptive reporters. Nobody wanted to go and smell for himself. Consequently, before the season was half over, the Hotel de Luxe was compelled to close its doors—as well as its windows. Pantechnicon vans again rumbled before the attractive villas—arriving empty, and going away full.

Whether Mr. Chaplin Church and his co-directors lost heart as well as money can only be surmised. What can be asserted quite definitely is that the Select Resorts Syndicate was wound up at the end of the season.

But the Hornet is still in her nest—Old Cark still digs for clams and cooks them in his cabin. As for the heaps of shells on the salterns, they do not grow appreciably; for nowadays Old Cark usually carries his refuse farther afield. There is quite a respectable heap in the exact centre of each tennis-court, and some smaller ones on the golf-links beyond. Sometimes—when he has been to Clamfleet and returned gloriously drunk—Old Cark will take a bucket and fill it at one of the parent heaps on the salterns. With unsteady gait he will lug it to the Hotel de Luxe, throw open a lower window, and make the night ring with the crash of falling shells on a hollow floor. Then he will lurch back to his old boat, shouting:

"Now, then, Mister Jerry-builder Church and Company! I'm ready for another bout with ye! One man agin a damned town—that's Old Cark!"

No matter how humble, meek and obscure a man may be he is still conceited enough to believe that he is leading the applause every time he goes to a theater.—*Buffalo Evening News.*

Some men blow out the gas, and others come home and let friend wife find a pair of elbow length gloves in their pockets.—*Luke McLuke.*

THE CUP ON THE NAIL

By JOHN MATTER

EE CAUTION was sombre and thirty, sombre as a turtle and thirty to a day. It would have taken him the whole of his birthday and five of the Seven Seas, to explain how he came to come—as he would have said—to this homestead on the Saskatchewan prairie. The desire to prosper bottomed everything. Kee Caution thought money-making a pastime, whereas the newspapers state it is an art, impure and not simple. Regardless of newspapers, the old saying that rolling stones gather no moss, holds true, of course, save for the exception, and then the rolling stone gathers everything in its path including momentum. All of which has little to do with the fact that Kee Caution would have resented the appellation of rolling stone.

Now that he was here, he wished himself there. Perhaps you will understand how poignant was this wish if you sustain an open mind and learn that Kee Caution went to bed and arose with the wish and lived with it during daylight and hugged it during darkness. It walked with him while he sought cowchips on the empty platter of prairie that outraged his sense of abundant nothingness; it sat with him while he peeled potatoes and described circumferences in biscuit dough with the top of a baking-powder can, and while he fired the stove, and while he ate potatoes and biscuits and drank chicory for coffee, and while he sat on the doorstep of the twelve by fifteen shack and simultaneously digested and gazed without binoculars straight from longitude 108 plus or minus, latitude 50 more or less, Saskatchewan, into the main street of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. There he saw the store front of the Punxsutawney Hardware Company wherein he had clerked before the heresy that money-making is a pastime had seized upon him and rolled him round the fourteen corners of the earth.

After Kee Caution had done with admiration of the concrete block front of the Punxsutawney Hardware Company—the shift of a cloud shadow at large upon the land, or the squeak of a gopher at home before a hole, generally fetched him from Pennsylvania—he would sigh and enter the twelve by fifteen shack and wash the dishes. In your eyes, perhaps, the utensils might not have justified his ecstasy in their cleansing.

After the manner of an inventory, they consisted of: one skillet, one coffee pot, one pint tin pail used as one cup and saucer, one knife and one fork, one large spoon, one small spoon, one tin plate, and one tin cup. The tin plate he finally bestowed, along with all the utensils save one, in the box under the bed. The tin cup he washed and rubbed with superior zeal, although there was, liberally speaking, necessity for neither, as the cup was never used except for quaffing water from the pail beside the door, and the law, as yet at least, does not require sanitary drinking cups on homesteads.

Above the table, wrought along with the bed and chair from the waste of the lumber that had been fashioned into the house, were two nails driven into the wall. Kee Caution always hung the tin cup on the nail to the right. Unfailingly he took from beneath the grain-sack

pillow upon the bed, a revolver, calibre forty-five, and fondled the weapon. Sometimes he addressed it by profane, endearing names such as—well, no matter. Often he wondered how it would feel to close down his teeth on the slim, blued barrel and touch a forefinger under the trigger guard. It would have been several days before an indifferent public could have the result. He was sixty miles from the nearest telegraph wire.

As Kee Caution sat on the doorstep at noon of his thirtieth birthday, he beheld a moving slur nicking the slope across the coulee. His first thought was of a coyote, one of the breed that rendered painful his nights by prolonged expression of the conviction that the world is lugubrious; but when the slur paused and flung a jet of arm against the sky, he realized that unmistakably he saw a man. He had seen no man for a longer time than he cared to determine, and now he squirmed with anticipation. He made no move beyond squirms and one glance within doors to ascertain if the cup was on the nail to the right. The slur slithered down the slope and was lost below the vision line. When it wavered up the nearer bank, it was a man with two legs and two arms and a head.

The stranger halted ten feet from the doorstep and pushed back the black felt hat which shaded his eyes. He was a sprig of a man who would weigh one-half of Kee Caution's pounds; but, then, one never can gauge the quality of an arrival by his quantity.

"Mornin'," vouchsafed this arrival.

"Mornin'."

"A Yankee, ain't you?" The newcomer's eyes were flitting like swallows about the man on the doorstep. "What part of God's country do you hail from?"

"Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. I wish I was there. I'd show 'em how to sell hardware."

"I bet you would all right. I can tell that to look at you. Got any drinkin' water?"

"Pail beside the door," replied Kee Caution, making way on the step for the stranger to pass. "Tin cup on the nail above the table. I always keep that tin cup hangin' on the nail to the right."

The man nodded and entered the one room of the shack. Kee Caution heard him take down the cup and plunge it into the pail, then he heard the gulp and sigh of thirst satisfied. A moment later he arose and entered. The tin cup was on the table, and the stranger was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"That touched the identical spot. It's hot walkin', and this late in August—"

"I said I always kept that tin cup hangin' on the nail to the right."

"You sure did, and that's where I found it. I didn't drink out of the bucket, though that would have been no hardship."

"I said I always kept—"

"I heard you. My hearin' is tolerable good, partner."

Kee Caution clenched his fist and the flesh on the rim of his jaws whitened. The other man was eyeing the contents of the house.

"I keep things where they belong," muttered Kee Caution, returning the tin cup to the right-hand nail.

"Should remark that you do. But you ain't ahold of so much that it would take you all day to keep it where it belongs. Such is homesteadin'. Looks to me that it would take the hide off for the first year or so. But I don't care. I don't know how to spell worry and I'm willin' to join the noble ranks of homesteaders. Fact is, the doctor told me to try it. Said I needed fresh air. You ain't acquainted with any good half sections nearby, layin' open and pinin' for a proprietor, are you?"

"Land is pretty well taken up 'round here," said Kee Caution, seating himself on the bed, while his guest selected the chair; "pretty well taken up."

"Hadn't seen a house for four miles till I struck your place. So far as I can tell the country ain't over-populated."

"Five miles to the nearest house," replied the host. "But that signifies nothin'. The land is filed on; least the fit land is. You can have the coulee gumbo; my land is all on the bench. The lads who filed are out threshin' to earn money to build with this fall. I'll have shacks all around me inside two months. Won't be so lonesome, then. I ain't seen a man in three weeks, but I can see all the way to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania."

"Great rattlers and little snakes! I'd hate to see that far."

The stranger glanced at the other hard for a second, then watched him from the shelter of a hand spread over his eyes as he asked, "What do you see? It must be worth lookin' at."

"The Punxsutawney Hardware Company. I sure can sell hardware."

"I bet you can. When I'm ready to buy my farmin' outfit, I'll remember you. Got any outfit of your own "

"No, not yet. That is, no outfit right here, but I've been thinkin' 'bout it and I have it all thought out as to just what I want and what I'm going to get.

"You see," continued Kee Caution, withdrawing his gaze from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and glancing at the tin cup on the right-hand nail, "I come in here last May with a couple of hundred in my jeans. I located this half section and walked back to town and filed. Bought a load of lumber and some grub and started back here. Paid the teamster forty good dollars to haul my load out. Been here ever since. I'm goin' to put in my first six months' residence duty and then I'm goin' to Punxsutawney for six months. I'll show 'em how to sell hardware. Goin' to work on a commission basis, I am. Just give me a commission, and that's all I ask; and in the spring I'll show homesteaders how to raise wheat. I'll come in with a team of horses, a yoke of oxen, a milk cow, forty chickens, a brood sow, and a complete outfit of farmin' machinery. I sure can sell hardware."

"My last doubt is gone. But in the meantime I'd have to work like killin' snakes if I was in your shoes. Don't the neighbors ever come 'round?"

"Nearest neighbor is five miles off, as I told you, and he don't believe in visitin'. No, the neighbors don't bother me and I don't pester them. I've got lots to do. It takes time to do all my fancyin'."

"You said somethin' then. Don't you ever have queer notions, performin' all that fancyin'?" The stranger glanced quickly at his host; and then as quickly out of the window when the other turned to face him.

"Other people has queer notions," replied Kee Caution. "I can't say that I ever has any. What for would I be havin' queer notions?"

"From livin' alone on this hulk of prairie that won't talk to you. It would make the bats buzz in my belfry. I don't know whether I was cut out to be a homesteader. What do you think?"

"Some people has queer notions, all right. Some people thinks a tin cup ought to hang on the left-hand nail; I've noticed that. A tin cup ought to hang on the right-hand nail. Anybody knows that."

"You said somethin' again, partner. The right-hand nail it is," agreed the other heartily.

"What's your name?" asked Kee Caution.

His guest paused for the half of a second, as though he were endeavoring to recall the date of the discovery of America. Kee Caution was considering whether his commission on hardware sales that winter should be five or ten per cent. and did not notice the pause. Indeed, the other might have halted the whole second without remark, for the advisability of compromising on seven and one-half per cent in case of a deadlock was engrossing the host.

"Hendershot."

"What?"

"Hendershot; Albert Hendershot."

"I thought you said somebody got shot. I was thinkin' of somethin' else. Hendershot; that's a funny name." The host spoke absently, and so did not witness the gleam that blazed and died like flashlights in the eyes of the man across the room. The man hitched in his chair, and one hand came out of his pocket like a ferret.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Kee Caution. Some folks used to think that was a funny name. I ain't responsible for my name. Anyway, I sure can sell hardware."

"I ain't disputatious, but I might be tempted. Can you do anything else?"

"Bake biscuits. How would you like a batch of biscuits? I used to put so much sody in 'em it was hard on the kidneys, but I've got it down to a hair now."

"I bet you have," agreed Hendershot.

"I bet you have it down to the shadow of a hair. I'll rustle a pail of water for you, old-timer, while you start mixin' up the dough. Where's the spring?"

"Go along the top of the coulee till you see some green grass runnin' up the side. The spring's just at the tip of the grass. I've dug it out some. You'll find it all right. I always dip out a pail first. It sort of keeps the spring sweet. I'll have the fire goin' and the flour mixin' by the time you get back."

Albert Hendershot bore away the pail and whistled as he went. Before he descended the coulee bank he ceased whistling and slowly looked around the prairie. There was no sign of moving life, no trace of man or beast in all that solemn immensity. "I thought you said somebody got shot," he repeated, under his breath, and wiped his forehead. The act was unnecessary, for he was not perspiring. He filled the pail at the spring and returned to the house, resuming his whistling as he topped the coulee bank.

"Whistlin' is considerable comfort," volunteered Kee Caution; "but I was never much at it. My tongue gets tangled in the notes and I fizzle like a popcock." He smiled for the first time that day and poured a little water into the pan of dough on the table.

"Say, fellow," as he punctiliously replaced the tin cup on the right-hand nail, "do you like strawberry or raspberry jam the best?"

"Strawberry for me."

The host dusted off his palms and seized the right hand of his guest. "And you're the galoot for me!" he cried. "Strawberry! That's the word." From a shelf behind the door he produced two jars. The one was labelled "Strawberry Jam," the other, "Raspberry Jam." He placed the two jars side by side upon the table.. "Many's the time," he continued, "I've had them two out and looked 'em over. I never could tell proper which one to open first. Fetched 'em both from town, I did, on my load of lumber, and they've been heaps of company to me. It was perplexin' to tell which to open first. See how those strawberries in there are red and enticin'? I'd ponder over them, and then I'd ponder over those raspberries. See how tantalizin' they are? They make your mouth feel like an artesian well. I couldn't tell which jar to tackle when the time came. One is for my birthday, which is to-day, and the other is for the day that I start to Punxsutawney. Now I know it was the strawberries I hankered for all along. You has a way of puttin' a man right."

They dined on biscuits and strawberry jam, potatoes and the distant relative of coffee called chicory. The host insisted that the guest monopolize the cutlery and the tin cup. For himself, he elected fingers and the pint tin pail. When the last strawberry had disappeared on the last biscuit, the men leaned back and smacked their lips.

"A Mounted Police told me a circus was comin' to town," said Kee Caution. "I ain't seen a circus in three years."

"Neither have I," replied Hendershot, slowly dropping his eyelids. "I'd like to see a circus. I like to watch the clowns."

"That Mounted Police told me a fellow who saw this circus in Calgary told him the clowns was the best he ever did see. Two of 'em has a sham shootin' duel. I'd like to see 'em."

"So would I," agreed Hendershot. His eyelids slowly raised. "I'd like to see the one that does the shootin'." He glanced swiftly at his host, who was looking into the empty jar as though he expected a new crop of strawberries to spring into jam therein. "What do you say we wash the dishes?"

"I'll wash and you wipe," said Kee Caution. "I wouldn't let nobody wipe those dishes 'cept a man who had told me that strawberry jam is better'n raspberry."

When the utensils had been washed and dried, the stranger neglected to hang the tin cup on the right-hand nail. He left it on the table. Kee Caution whirled with a snarl.

"What's troublin' you?" asked Hendershot.

"I've told you once and I'm tellin' you twice to hang that tin cup on the right-hand nail. The next time I won't tell you."

"Whoa, take it easy, ol' hoss. Don't jangle up the traces. I'm willin' to oblige. It's your housekeepin', not mine. I'll hang that tin cup 'round your neck, if you say the word."

"Hang it on the nail where it belongs."

"There it is, all safe and sound and no damage done, on the right-hand nail."

Kee Caution's face softened. "I didn't mean to whang the dashboard to pieces," he said. "Livin' alone sort of gets me, sometimes. No harm meant."

"That's all right; no harm done," replied Hendershot. "I bet livin' alone would give me the jumps proper. I'd hate to live on this prairie with just an uneasy conscience for company."

"I don't believe in consciences, easy or uneasy."

"Well, if I had killed a man, for instance, or even thought I had, I wouldn't want to live on this prairie alone."

"You wouldn't, eh? Why, if you had a backbone, you could live here alone if you had killed a dozen men."

"Not if I had killed a dozen," Hendershot answered. "I couldn't stand it then." His hand was spread over his eyes and he was studying intently his host's face. "Maybe I wouldn't mind so much if I'd just killed one man."

Kee Caution yawned and stretched. "Think I'll rest a while," he mumbled, and went to the bed. He flung himself down and thrust his arms beneath the pillow. "I'm gettin' sleepy."

"Funny how thirsty I keep gettin'," said Hendershot. "Do you suppose it's the sody in the biscuits?" He reached for the tin cup and dipped a drink from the pail. Then he hung the cup on the left-hand nail. When he turned, he gazed into the bore of his host's revolver.

There was silence in the shack for fifty-nine seconds that endured like fifty-nine hours. Hendershot continued to plumb the interior of the slim, blued barrel. "More hardware," he murmured.

"Put that tin cup on the right-hand nail where it belongs," commanded Kee.

"Certainly. There it is, on the right-hand nail, right side up with care. Do you want to sell that gun?"

"Not for sale. I'll give you free gratis for nothin', a chunk of lead if you want it."

"Thanks, no. I would be worried 'bout lead poisonin'." Hendershot sat himself on the chair. The motion hitched free his right hip pocket. "Let's talk this here misunderstandin' over. I was enjoyin' myself till you begun displayin' hardware samples. This ain't the Punxsutawney Hardware Company in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania."

"There's nothin' to talk over save whether I make a lead mine of your heart or of your gizzard."

"Help yourself. That don't interest me."

"It does me. I'll think 'bout it for a spell. You set still on that chair."

"Of course," replied Hendershot. "You don't mind if I play cards while you do your spell of fancyin'? There's a deck in my outside coat pocket."

"Take it out."

Hendershot produced the playing cards and began dealing poker hands on the table to himself and an imaginary opponent. "Ever play poker?" he inquired, casually, when his opponent had bested him three times running.

"I'm the man who invented cards," replied Kee Caution, raising himself on his left elbow and continuing to level the slim, blued barrel. "What did you bust that two pair and draw three cards for?"

"What for? The ways of men are beyond comprehension. Just 'cause I had a hunch. See that? Caught a jack, I did. Was it a pretty hunch? Somethin' tells me it was. Do three jacks beat a pair of nines and a pair of deuces? My lawyer informs me they do. And that's for why, bucko, I busted two pair." He shuffled the pack and dealt new hands. "So you are the man who invented cards? Come to think of it, I invented draw poker, if that's any comfort to you on cold and stormy nights. Somethin' tells me I'm the better man in the practice of my invention."

Kee Caution slid his feet over the edge of the bed. "Somethin' whispers to me you howl like a jabberin' mule," he retorted. "Deal a hand on the table and a hand on the bed."

"What stakes? I never play for my health."

"You're playin' for your health this time, stranger," said Kee Caution. "If you win this hand you go whole hide out the door and on your way where you desire; if you lose, you go dead and on your way where you deserve."

"One hand tells the tale, and I deal?"

"Why more? I can play poker most as well as I can sell hardware, and I sure—"

"Say no more. Already I perceive it is next door to useless for me to go against you. Howsomever, I'm your company and that's a powerful argument. We're off!"

Hendershot dealt the cards slowly and methodically. He smiled to himself and hummed under his breath. Kee Caution scowled and continued to aim the revolver.

"Everybody kindly keep their fists off the pasteboards until I'm through," murmured Hendershot. "Now, there we are. Five cards in a row, face down on the bed, and five cards in a row, face down on the table—two poker hands. You think you're a sport, don't you?" he continued, smiling at his host. "All right. Lay that piece of hardware on the floor between us. I'll turn up one card, and you turn up one card. High card wins and takes the gun."

"Let me point out the card for you to turn?" asked Kee Caution. "You ain't sport enough for that."

Hendershot wetted his lips. "I'm sport enough for that," he answered.

Kee Caution placed the revolver on the floor equidistant from their feet. "I'll go first," he said, and turned a king. He paused and looked into the other man's face. "Is the gun mine again?"

"Not yet," replied Hendershot calmly. "Point out the card for me to turn."

"Turn that one."

"I'm a dead-game sport. You can turn it for me."

Kee Caution leaned over the table and studied the backs of the cards. One of his feet edged toward the revolver deposited on the floor. "This one," he decided, and turned an ace.

The strategy of the foot was wasted effort for as the ace showed face up, a revolver that sped from Hendershot's right hip pocket was pressed into Kee Caution's temple.

"You're Kee Caution, alias Swift Founds, alias Gifford the Clown, who shot his teammate last week!" cried Hendershot.

"Think so?"

"I know so!"

"How do you know?"

"Many's the time I've watched your duel act in the show. H'm! That was good business just now 'bout the cup on the nail. I've heard of homesteaders who lived alone gettin' fussy like that over housekeepin'. Good business, that was. But you played it too strong. You wouldn't have give me a chunk of lead free gratis for nothin'. You was just tryin' to shoo me off."

"Think so? Who are you?"

"Me? Oh, I'm only a card shark that followed the show. They run me out of the next town we played after you let daylight into your partner. They said my work was raw. Maybe so, but there's five kings on that bed and five aces on this table. H'm! I wonder where's the owner of these diggin's?"

"Present," said an amused voice from the open doorway. They looked up to behold a sunburned son of the prairie covering them with the ample muzzle of a ten-gauge shotgun.

It is often claimed that every person has a mission to perform, but it is a question what the wardrobe mistresses of some of the musical shows can possibly find to do.—*New York Evening Mail.*

New York bills for snow removal this year are said to be over $20,000,000. What would it have been had the snow been removed? —*Bridgeport Telegram.*

Bolshevism is the wood-alcohol of government.—*Louisville Post.*

THE FACE IN THE ICE

By FREDERIC SIMPICH

ON his knees by the campfire, Red Olesen fussed with the coffee pot, which had just tipped over for the second time.

"Hand me two or three of them little rocks there behind you, Dutch," he growled; "this damn pot won't stay balanced."

It was January, and the pine-bordered Okanogan was frozen over, save for yawning airholes here and there, where dark rapids gurgled. In a narnow gorge leading back from the river, whirling wind eddies had swept a rocky nook bare of snow. Here Red Olesen and "Big Dutch," off for a week's hunt from the construction camp at Wahachee dam, were resting for the night.

Big Dutch, who was Fritz Korg on the payroll, swung heavily about and reached for a few loose stones that lay on the frozen earth. He was a gross, unlovely animal, was Big Dutch; his soiled corduroy coat, his scraggly yellow beard and his crooked, tusklike teeth that showed through it, seemed all the same hue of dirty yellow. He grunted audibly, beastlike, as he stooped over to pick up the stones and tossed them, one at a time, to the man by the fire.

"Throw me a flatter one," commanded Olesen, still seeking to prop up the unstable pot. Again Big Dutch stooped, grunting, and pawed among the scattered stones; finding what seemed a flat one, frozen to the earth, he stood erect and kicked it loose, and with the toe of his heavy-laced boot, rolled it over the ground to Olesen.

"That'll hold her," said the man by the fire, as he picked up the flat, oddly-shaped fragment that Big Dutch had kicked loose. Olesen started to shove the thing under the pot, then hesitated, hefting it curiously. It seemed strangely heavy for its size.

For twenty years, Red Olesen had alternately worked — and prospected. When he had slaved for months at some grinding task and saved a stake, he would outfit himself and slip off into the hills, seeking always for gold. He had never found it, but half a lifetime of failure had not shaken his faith; some day, he felt, he would strike it rich. So now, with that constant vigilance of those who dwell in mineral lands, to whom all "rock" is the potential habitat of treasure, Red Olesen leaned closer to the fire, peering intently at the object in his hand. For a full minute he scrutinized it.

"It's nothing but a rock," growled Big Dutch impatiently; "stick it under that pot before it upsets again."

But Red Olesen had laid the thing on the ground and was drawing his short belt-axe. With one corner of the blade he struck a sharp blow, then dropped his axe and grabbed frantically, as one who clutches at a falling object. For the thing Red Olesen hit had not fractured, nor had there been a metallic ring, as when an axe hits rock; instead, the blow was dull, and where the blade had struck, a yellowish scar glinted in the firelight.

For minutes, Olesen crouched, star-

ing fixedly at the nugget, now clasped tightly in his nervous fingers. His big breast rose and fell, his breath coming in long sighs. Here was gold!—the gold he had sought so long, a great, solid chunk of it, a chunk like one he had once seen an Indian bring into Spokane, only larger! "Two thousand dollars, if it's a cent!" he whispered; and not once did he look at Big Dutch, his bunkie these many months. "Two thousand, if it's a cent!" he repeated aloud, turning the nugget lovingly in his great hairy hands.

"That's a thousand apiece," spoke Big Dutch slowly. And he leaned forward, closer to the gold in Olesen's hands.

The neglected coffee was boiling over and the bacon had burnt to a crisp. But still Red Olesen crouched by the fire clutching the nugget, heedless of the yellow-toothed giant who stood over him, unconscious of the evil gleam awakening in the little pig-eyes of Big Dutch.

"That's a thousand apiece," repeated the big man, doggedly.

Slowly, furtively, Red Olesen raised his head and looked full into the ugly, sullen face of Big Dutch.

"How do you figure that out?" he asked coldly.

For a long, tense minute, Big Dutch unwavering, returned the threatening stare of the man with the gold. Then he stooped, poked the burnt-off ends of sticks into the fire and refilled the coffee pot.

"Let's eat, Red," he said calmly, as he opened their little pack and took out bread and sugar. He pulled an iron fork from the pack, too, and handed it to Olesen.

Still gripping the nugget in his left hand, Red Olesen took the iron fork and fished burnt bacon from the hot pan. Without words, after the way of their kind, both men ate wolfishly.

Big Dutch finished first. With his blanket about him, he leaned back against a boulder and lit his pipe. When Olesen had eaten, he, too, lay down, across the fire from Big Dutch, holding the nugget close to his nose, and not taking his eyes from it once in a long half hour.

The moon was up now, flooding the snow-covered ice with bright light. From where he sat, his dead cold pipe gripped between yellow teeth, Big Dutch could see well out over the frozen river. And there before him, in easy range, three deer walked slowly, in single file, coming cautiously from the dark wooded bank. It was deer that had brought Big Dutch and Red Olesen on this long tramp, and the big man's loaded rifle lay near, but he settled more comfortably into his blanket and closed his eyes — almost — and snored, regularly, deeply.

To Red Olesen, weary from the day's hard tramp, the fire was warm; he had just eaten heavily and here in his hands lay wealth, a chunk of gold that meant months of ease. The very thought caressed his mind and soothed him. There seemed something almost hypnotic in the very touch of the gold itself, and Red Olesen dozed. Delicious dreams came to him, dreams of revels, in Spokane, in Seattle, in the gambling halls of the Coeur d'Alenes. By and by, the man with the gold slept soundly, his red face against the treasure.

Then furtively, Big Dutch opened his eyes, the eyes that had been almost closed, and cautiously, easily, for one so bulky, he rose silently to his feet and gently reached for his rifle.

Long hours later, tramping steadily down the Okanogan ice, a big man traveling alone, reached the construction camp at Wahachee dam. And far up-stream, in an empty gorge, whirling wind eddies scattered the ashes of a dead camp fire.

"Red drowned!" explained Big Dutch

quietly. "Three deer was crossin' the Okanogan ice near the Kitlat rapids, where the airholes are. They was the first deer we'd seen, and we was excited at the time. As Red slips into the airhole he grabs hold of my coat. See here, where he tore the collar? No man livin' could a pulled him out o' that strong current. It just sucked him under the ice quick and gurgled off with him."

The rough, hungry men, busy at supper in the mess shack, listened in silence as Big Dutch told how Red Olesen had died. They were all veterans of dangerous callings, these brawny, unkempt powdermen, bridge workers and river rats, acquainted with peril and the spectacle of violent death. Also, they had seen this mad river claim others, just as Big Dutch said it had claimed Red Olesen. Likewise, Big Dutch had iron fists and the teeth of a wolf, and no questions were asked.

Later, in the privacy of the cabins, a few whispered together, doubtfully, and then slept. It was only old Huggins, the garrulous camp cook, who talked openly of Red Olesen's end—but never in Big Dutch's hearing.

"I tell you, boys," he insisted in his high cracked voice, "it ain't just regular. When two men goes off in the woods and one comes back alone—"

"Cut it out, Cookie!" admonished Crip Watkins, a powderman. "Olesen was no damn good, anyway; and if it ain't as Big Dutch says—"

"But the authorities—" began old Huggins again.

"Let them do their own worryin'," croaked the little powderman, as he limped out on the leg once fractured by a blast. "The super just sent for Big Dutch; they'll frame up a regular report and send it in. Like as not, when the ice goes out, they'll fish up what's left of Olesen, somewhere down the Columbia; the coroner'll get his fees and that'll be the end of it."

Next day, Big Dutch was sent far into the great woods to boss the timber cutters. It was weeks before Wahachee camp saw him again. Olesen's death was no longer talked of, except by the loquacious old Huggins.

A warm Chinook blew, the day Big Dutch came back, and men ate at noon without their coats. As the crew filed out of the mess shack, old Huggins beckoned slyly to his lame confidant, Crip Watkins.

"Crip," he whispered excitedly, thrusting his tobacco-stained gray beard close to the little powderman's ear, "Big Dutch is wearin' somethin' round his neck, hard and bulky—in a leather bag. I seen it when I reached over him to pour his coffee, when his shirt was open."

"Forgit it, Cookie. You're too darn suspicious," grumbled Watkins, limping away. "One of these days Big Dutch'll wring your skinny neck!"

But old Huggins did not forget it; instead, he dodged Big Dutch, shadowed him by night, and made excuses to go to his cabin; and in a week he knew what Big Dutch carried hidden in that leather bag. And one by one, the men of the camp came to know it.

Once, at supper, before Big Dutch came in, old Huggins's busy tongue was wagging.

"Speakin' of finding gold," he began, though no one had mentioned gold, "any of you boys remember them two Englishmen, Bruce and Watts, that prospected up the Okanogen in the nineties? Remember how Watts found the thousand-dollar nugget in the creek bed? And how Bruce took it, just to look at it, and how he turned and beat Watts in the face with the gold till he killed him? And how he run away, and how often he washed that nugget to get the stains off it, and how them stains always come back? And by and by, at least, so Bruce said at his trial, that nugget begun to change shape

and commence to look like Watts's face—like Watts's face after Bruce had beat him to death with the chunk of gold. Then you remember how this worried Bruce till he went bugs and went and give himself up and was tried and hung for murder?"

"Aw, shut up—and pass the bread," ordered Crip Watkins, who had sensed the bulky figure of Big Dutch, always alone now, swinging up the path to the mess-house.

The ice in the Okanogan was breaking up now, and spring work on the dam had begun.

Toward noon next day, Big Dutch, skillful in timber work, was bossing the pile-driver crew. A temporary tower for driving light piles had been erected on the river's edge. Big Dutch himself had climbed to its top to adjust the heavy pulley.

To this day, no man of that old Wahachee crew can say just what caused the accident. Some say it was a fault in building; others claim it was soft mud on the side next the current, that made the tower sag that way. Anyhow, hardly had Big Dutch reached its top than it began to sway and totter. The crew on the ground yelled "Jump!" "Look out!" "Stay with it!" and other useless advice to Big Dutch, up there on top of the rocking tower. For a moment it reeled, then moved from the perpendicular and fell straight out into the Okanogan, crashing and splintering on the moving ice cakes.

Big Dutch sprang clear of the tower as it fell, splashing into the icy open water that raced between the moving floes. Almost instantly, a rope was thrown to him. His position was perilous, among the huge, grinding ice cakes; but if the rope held, and he could fight free of the crush, it would be easy to pull him out.

Once, as the workers ashore pulled on the rope which Big Dutch had seized and placed about his shoulders, they had him within thirty feet of the bank, but a jagged, berg-like floe, traveling with a rotary motion not unlike a circular saw, emerged suddenly from the black water and bore down swiftly against the taut rope. Its sharp, serrated edge struck with a buzzing sound and sawed through several strands of the line. To the superstitious, it seemed that some unnatural force was driving that ice cake, driving it on to sever the rope that meant life to Big Dutch.

In vain the group ashore tried to slacken the rope, or throw it above that pressing, turning ice. Big Dutch, too, saw his peril and fought calmly, steadily, with singular judgment; with every ounce of his famous giant strength he sought to swim ahead of the ice, to work the rope off the edge of that jagged saw. But no matter how fast he swam, the ice seemed to float just as fast, and every time it turned over and its sharp edge scraped that tightened rope, a few more strands parted and Big Dutch's chance for life seemed less.

The men ashore, knowing that if once the rope broke, Big Dutch must be swept to death in the rapids just below, or crushed in the grinding ice, now pulled desperately on the line, hauling the struggling man close in against the intervening ice cake.

But no rope ever made could hold long against that strain and the constant chafe and cut of the ice. Suddenly, when they had drawn Big Dutch tight against the side of the turning floe, the weakened rope snapped. It seemed Big Dutch's time had come.

Then a singular thing happened. The revolving ice cake that had seemed to send Big Dutch to his doom, turned sharply over as the rope broke; it did not turn with the current now, but sideways, toward the shore. And there, caught on a tiny ledge in its side, sprawled Big Dutch; half over, it

turned and then floated steadily, the big man fairly atop of it.

With loud shouts of encouragement, the gang ashore hastily drew in the remnant of their broken rope, one end of which they still held, and as the floe bearing Big Dutch pressed closer in to the bank, they recoiled the line and made a quick throw. It fell square-across the shoulders of the man on the ice; he had now but to leap into the open water between his ice raft and the bank and be drawn to safety.

But even as the rope settled upon him and they yelled for him to jump, Big Dutch seemed to crumple on the ice. They saw him sink to hands and knees and stare, stare in ghastly unbelief, straight into the crystal ice beneath him; and they saw horror unspeakable distort his ugly face. Then up he sprang, still staring wildly at the ice, his scream of terror ringing loud above the roar of water and grinding ice. And each second carried him nearer the rapids, where inevitable death lurked.

Those on the bank, running along and keeping pace with the strange raft, threw their rope to him and recoiled it and threw it again and again, and shouted frantically to him. But he heeded them not; he even shook the rope from him, when once it fell across his neck. And always he stared, like a hypnotized man, straight down into the ice beneath him.

"He is mad! Crazy mad!" gasped old Huggins, who had rushed from the cook house when the tower fell and followed the group down-stream.

Big Dutch pulled at his shirt now, literally tearing it open in his frenzy. From a string about his hairy neck he jerked a packet and wrenched from within it a flat object with a yellow mark, that glinted in the sun.

"Take it! Take it and get back to hell with it!" he screamed, and there was the madness of fear in his bulging eyes. With a hoarse curse he flung the nugget against the ice, then reeled and plunged headlong into the foaming, angry maelstrom of grinding ice and water—at the brink of the rapids. And the nugget, balancing but a moment, slipped from the swaying ice floe and fell plump into the water, right where Big Dutch had gone down. In dumb dread, vaguely conscious of some singular tragedy unfolding before them, the silent men ashore huddled together —afraid.

Then the mystery of Big Dutch's strange fate solved itself.

The giant crystal ice chunk, the one that had first cut Big Dutch's rope and then saved him from death, moved with the current close inshore and turned slowly over within a foot of the steep bank. And there, inside the transparent ice, the frozen face of a dead man peered out and in his frozen right hand was clutched the collar of a corduroy coat.

Owing to crowded conditions in the Presidential ring, future candidates had better check their hats.—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

Unless something is done about it presently, the silk shirt may become the distinguishing mark of the proletariat.—*Chicago Daily News.*

THE EMPTY ROOM

By C. CLEVES MACKIE

AT nine o'clock that evening, Mr. Alexander Drake led the way into a little card-room on the third floor of the Unity Club, and having settled himself with three friends around a table under the central light, he slipped a crisp greenback into the tingling plan of Timpkins, and bade him stand guard outside the closed door.

At nine-fifteen, Timpkins was ordered to bring a fresh pack of cards, and the four men settled down to a sober rubber of whist.

Ah nine-thirty, Timpkins brought liquid refreshments as per request. At ten o'clock, he brought more refreshments of the same character. It was exactly ten-thirty when he barred the doorway against the entrance of another servant.

"Ah'm sorry, Ferdinand, but Mistah Drake's orders is dat no one am to enter dat room till he's finished playin' cyards," said Timpkins, regretfully.

Ferdinand, who was new to the staff, rolled the white of an eye toward the forbidden room.

"Am dat gentleman de milyunair whut dey's all talkin' about?" he whispered.

Timpkins nodded loftily.

"Dat am Milyunair Drake," he admitted; "and whut's more, boy, dere's three more milyunairs shut up in dat little room! I expect dey's as much as two hundred milyun in dere!"

"Golly!" gasped Ferdinand. "Is dey got it all wid 'em?

Timpkins smile tolerantly.

"I reckon not. It's Mistah Drake's buthday and he's been dinin' his fren's in de private banquet room; seems like he wouldn't play cyards nowhere but in dis yere little room; and dey cain't nobody enter till dey goes out. I'se heah on gyard."

"I spect you ain't doin' it foh nothin'," murmured Ferdinand enviously, as he moved away.

By way of response, Timpkins crackled the crisp greenback.

Presently the elevator disgorged a merry quartette of club members who made at once for the little card-room which Timpkins was guarding.

Timpkins lifted a deprecating black hand.

"I'se sorry, gentlemen, but de room is occupied!"

"That's bally hard luck!" said a stout, ruddy-faced man. "This is my last try for a place to have a quiet game. Come on down to the Exor, boys."

The elevator arose and yawned to receive them again, and then dropped to the lower floor.

Timpkins shifted his weary feet and wished the millionaires would go home.

" 'Tain't respectable for a lot of dem gran'father old men to sit up to all hours gamblin' dere milyuns away," he muttered peevishly.

At that moment a stout, fussy little man paused before the door. Timpkins began his apologetic remonstrance, but the fussy little man brushed the negro aside and opened the door of the little card-room. He looked inside and then turned a wrathful face to the servant.

"How dare you tell me that the room is occupied when it is empty?" he roared. "I shall report you at once."

As he pattered toward the elevator, Timpkins slid around the doorway and poked his woolly head into the room.

It was empty.

The four card players had vanished. A strong light shone down upon a litter of cards and empty glasses on the table, a box of choice cigars and brass smoking trays. The air was heavy with dead tobacco smoke, and there was no sign of the four millionaires.

Timpkins stared hard. "I ain't been asleep, dat's a fac'," he muttered in bewilderment; "and dey ain't but one doah and de windows air all locked fas' and tight."

While Timpkins still gaped at the empty room, Bently, the house manager, arrived with the fussy fat man who was complaining bitterly of the wretched service at the club.

"I shall bring this matter before the board of directors, sir," he fumed, as they reached the card-room door.

"I'm sure there is some mistake, Mr. Smithers," soothed Bently, as he laid a strong hand on Timpkins's coattail and jerked the discomfited menial into the corridor. "Now, see here, Timpkins," he said sternly, "I want to know why you told Mr. Smithers that the card-room was occupied when it was not?"

"Befo' de Lord, Mistah Bently, I ain't stirred from dis doah—it happened disaway—" and Timpkins related at great length, the incidents of the evening, from the moment when Mr. Drake had enlisted his services as guardian of the card-room door and riveted the bargain with a five-dollar bill, to the instant when Mr. Smithers had discovered the empty room.

"You've been asleep," decided the manager sharply.

But Timpkins repeated his story again and again, until Bently, and even the skeptical Smithers, were inclined to believe him.

"They are in some other room," said Bently at last, although he admitted that the only exit from the card-room was the door which Timpkins had guarded, and he made a thorough search of the rambling club building, which had been remodeled from a block of brownstone dwellings.

At midnight the club manager, his assistants, and the entire staff of servants, knew that something was wrong in that ancient and exclusive organization.

Four prominent men had mysteriously disappeared from a close room and left no clue behind them. The check boy in the coat room reported that the missing gentlemen had not called for their hats and overcoats, and the doorkeeper swore that they had not passed his portal. No one had seen Alexander Drake and his three friends from the moment when they had entered the little card-room.

Bently studied the litter of cards on the table, and declared the game had been abandoned at an interesting point.

Granted that the players had lost interest in the game, how could they have disappeared from the room? There were no signs of a struggle unless one noticed that a picture on one wall hung rather awry. Bently straightened it, and made a mental note to have the picture hung higher, where it would be out of the way.

At two o'clock, having received an anxious inquiry from Mr. Drake's valet, who was waiting up for his master and his guests, Bently telephoned to a private detective agency. It was the manager's duty to see that the matter did not get into the papers.

In a short time appeared a foxy little man from the agency, Rennard by name, who nosed around the building, catechised every one on the premises, and finally confided to Bently that in his opinion the four millionaires had been murdered, their bodies disposed of in some mysterious way, and that the murderer was still in the house.

"But who in creation could commit such a crime with Timpkins on guard at the door?" asked Bently wearily.

Rennard smiled in a superior manner. "Why, Timpkins, of course!" he retorted triumphantly.

In spite of Bently's protests, the terrified Timpkins was carried off to be privately interviewed, and later to be held as a suspicious character in the matter of the disappearance of Alexander Drake and his friends.

When Rennard and his prisoner had departed, the telephone bell rang sharply. A thin voice came crisply over the wire:

"Unity Club? This is the Morning Star office. Please connect me with somone who can tell me about the attempted robbery at the club this morning."

"Go to the devil!" was Bently's misleading direction as he slammed the receiver on its hook.

An hour earlier, while detective Rennard still searched for clues within, something was happening around on the Thirty-seventh Street side of the club. Policeman Dennis Breen, on fixed post at the corner, detached himself from the pavement to ease his aching feet with a little stroll in the dark shadow of the building.

Suddenly, before his very eyes, the pavement yawned and disgorged a human being.

Dennis Breen's arm was strong, and his hand was heavy upon the collar of the individual whom he jerked up out of the coal hole and thumped violently upon the sidewalk. In a trice the man's wrists were handcuffed. He made no protest.

"Any more of yez?" asked Breen.

From the sooty depths below the Unity Club building, there came an exceedingly bitter cry.

Breen leaped to his signal box, summoned aid, and went back to his silent prisoner.

Fifteen minutes later, when the patrol wagon backed up to the door of the police station, four prisoners were escorted before the sergeant while officer Breen made a charge against them.

When they were searched, it was discovered that beneath the layer of soft-coal dust that covered them from head to foot and rendered their features indistinguishable, each one wore evening clothes. Some handsome jewelry was removed from them, and they were hustled into four cells.

The sergeant flicked some coal dust from his fingers, and examined the articles which had been removed from the prisoners. There were four diamond rings, four thin gold watches, four wallets containing cards and fat rolls of money. Everything was grimy with coal dust.

"Call the Unity Club and see if anyone is up there," he ordered.

Later, when Bently stamped in, indignant at being disturbed from a nap he was enjoying on his office sofa, he glared at the sergeant.

"Burglars at the club?" he snorted incredulously. "You'll have to show me! First I've heard about it—unless they've kidnapped four baldheaded millionaires who disappeared this evening."

"There are four of the chaps, and desperate-looking fellows at that; they could have a millionaire apiece and not worry! Breen, bring the prisoners in."

When they appeared, the manager of the Unity Club stared at them with puzzled eyes.

They were desperate-looking characters indeed, giving outward evidence of the coal heap from which they had been dragged. Black from head to foot, with only the whites of their eyes showing oddly under the sooty lashes, they looked like members of a minstrel troupe.

They were rather small and wiry individuals, but there was a grimness about their bearing that hinted of strength in reserve. Secrecy locked their lips.

Bently stared at them, and the four suspects gave him back stare for stare, almost impudently.

"Gentlemen Raffles—all," remarked the sergeant facetiously.

A sickly grin overspread the manager's face. He turned to the sergeant.

"These gentlemen," he explained slowly, "are guests of the club. As such, they had a perfect right to leave the clubhouse by any of its exits. If they choose the coal hole that's their affair. Of course your men are to be commended for doing their duty—and I can assure you that they will not go unrewarded. I will vouch for these gentlemen, Sergeant." Here Bently winked at the sergeant, and that official handed over the valuables he had gleaned from the prisoners, and Bently went away with his charges.

After they had passed the open-mouthed watchman, and were on their way up the stairs to the baths on the top floor, Alexander Drake took a roll of bills from his pocket and turned to the manager.

"By the way," he said, "just give this to Timpkins, will you, please?"

"Timpkins," said Bently sourly, "will not be in until morning; he's held under suspicion of having committed four murders!"

And he could have sworn that four pair of shoulders shook as the grimy men plodded toward the stairway.

The next morning, Timpkins was summoned to assist the manager, who was in the third-floor card-room with a workman.

"Just lift down this picture, Timpkins," said Bently, and as the servant removed it from its position low down on the wall, there was disclosed an opening two feet square. From the opening a polished chute led down into darkness.

"'Scuse me, sah," said Timpkins respectfully, "but might I ask whah dat hole goes to?"

"That hole, Timpkins," said Bently patiently, "is an abandoned laundry chute. This part of the clubhouse was once a private dwelling, and the chute has never been closed. I am now having it nailed up in case some club member, smitten with sentimental memories of his boyhood days spent in this same house, might try to repeat a boyish stunt and recklessly slide down the laundry chute to the soiled clothes basket in the laundry in the cellar."

"And what would happen if they did do dat?" gasped Timpkins.

Bently smiled grimly.

"They would land up to their necks in soft coal and probably be pinched by the police," he explained.

Timpkins thrust a hand in his pocket, brought out a wad of soiled bills and fingered them pensively.

"I wondered how dat money got all kivered with coal dust," he said.

Just like the conceit of man to call a woman's vanity-case her "vamping utensils"—when, as every girl knows, it's nothing but an innocent little "repair kit."—*Helen Rowland.*

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES

By D. A. WASSON

LATE one afternoon a warm and friendly sou'wester fanned the down-east coaster *Monhegan* past the Isles of Shoals. Little Cap'n Ephraim Cutwater lowered his canvas-covered spyglass and turned to his six-foot spouse. "Don't ye cal'late we'd better dodge inter Porchmith to-night, Lizy?" he whined. "Looks kinder dirty off there in the southeast!"

When other captains consulted their barometers, Cap'n Ephraim interviewed his wife, to the crew's secret joy. In their opinion "Old Fathom" was all wool and a yard wide, and she could pull the wool over hubby's red little eyes all she chose. She had sailed with him longer than most of them could remember, and it was forecastle gossip that Cap'n Ephraim was skipper only by courtesy.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" scoffed his better three-quarters. "Ephraim Cutwater, you never in the world see more than a little fog with the moon so nigh full as she is, and you know it. We'll haul her right out southeast by east and make our run; that's what we'll do!"

"I wanted to mud her in there to Kittery Cove and try to git at that new leak in the rudder port, Lizy dear," pleaded the captain, trying a new tack.

The imperturbable Mrs. Ephraim cracked a knowing smile. "This old hooker has sweat her little three hundred clips an hour ever since we took her, Ephraim Cutwater, and you know it. She ain't leakin' no more, is she?"

"I kin see the masts of quite a little fleet in there already, Lizy," urged the skipper, raising the glass once more and conveniently forgetting to answer her question.

His helpmeet grunted again. "All you see, or wanter see, Ephraim Cutwater, is the chimleys of them breweries, and you know it. If there's any vessels in there for a harbor they're bound west. If we ever went in there we'd ground onto our beef bones before we ever got out. You'd be three sheets in the wind so quick 'twould make your head swim!" With this unconscious truism she waved her hand and dismissed the subject.

Thirsty Cap'n Ephraim regretfully saw the hazy outline of the genial New Hampshire sands slowly merge into the rocky and austere coast of the prohibition state as the *Monhegan* winged out and headed down shore with Boon Island's slim white tower over the starboard cathead.

Several craft behind her proceeded sheep-like to follow suit. There was marked, though prudently silent displeasure on the part of the foiled skipper. In his present state of mind he would have liked to see them scudding panic-tricken for port, his own vessel overwhelmed in a sudden tempest and himself vindicated with his tyrannical wife's last gurgling breath.

But no such luck. The dull red sun foundered in a smoky glowing west full of promise for the morrow. A swell, soft and gentle as the touch of a mother's hand, wafted the *Monhegan* away from the cooling sea of molten light astern, into ominous gloom in the east, which the captain fondly hoped might hide the ingredients of foul weather.

Again no such luck. Its menace too,

was scattered, first by a luminous mist over the horizon, then by a wondering oval moon which oozed over the sea rim and hung almost on the jib-boom end, as if to bar the way. Instead it dripped an undulating silvery lane clean to the old schooner's bluff bow, and as the breeze freshened she trod it as eagerly as a boy on forbidden ground. Cap'n Ephraim was moved to admit grudgingly to himself that it was a pretty good kind of night for a run, after all.

Astern, the red and green eyes of one of the silent craft which had reached the same conclusion, followed the *Monhegan's* bubbling wake devoutly, though wan in the white glare of the moon. A spectral pinnacle of canvas caught and reflected its pale glory as the pursuer closed up slowly on the coaster. It was a dainty white schooner yacht, garbed in the last towering cloth of her fine raiment; a dove with the wings of a swan.

Everyone knows that a stern chase is a long one. This one was so long that the moon no longer lighted the way when the tear and swash of the yacht's foaming progress could be heard from the schooner. It still touched fleetingly on the brasswork of her exquisite decks, but no longer glorified the pinions of this queen of the night as it peeped shyly from behind her.

"Hello aboard the schooner! Where's the other one?" came suddenly from behind the yacht's bellying spinnaker, the sound echoing hollowly against the *Monhegan's* dingy sails.

"What other one?" inquired Captain Ephraim dutifully, just as his lady and mistress popped on deck partly clad in her husband's great-coat.

"Why, the one they sawed off from that one," came in tones of triumph from the unseen jester. Faint but appreciative haw-haws came from the unseen jackies of the watch and a chorus of sulky silence from the chunky coaster. "No offence, my good man!" resumed the talkative yacht. This was another voice, less pleasant to listen to than the first. "Just report us will you? This is the schooner yacht *Free Lance*, J. Archibald Martingale owner, from Nassau for Bar Harbor, seventeen days out."

Here Old Fathom entered the conversation in her best heavy weather voice. "Well, this is the schooner *Monhegan*, J. Ephraim Cutwater master, from Boston for Boothbay, and we been out the biggest part of the night! You can do yer own reportin', you Smart Alecks, and you better sheer off lively or that galoot at the wheel will have ye afoul of us!"

"Good God, Howard, turn out quick!" one of the yachtsmen shouted down the companionway. "Here's the suffragette navy right on top of us!"

"Ephraim Cutwater, will you let anyone insult your pore wife so-fashion? Get right up atop of that house and tell them drunken dudes what we think of 'em, if you're a man!" screamed the maligned one.

At about this time Ephraim arrived on all fours upon the cabin top, but if he had formulated any ideas in flight it is fair to presume that the expression of them would have in no way helped the cause of outraged femininity. He scrambled to his feet and stood speechless, evidently stage struck. Both crews, in various stages of undress uniform, were now enjoying the exchange of amenities.

"Ephraim Cutwater, are you deef and dumb? Your pore wife has been insulted somethin' fearful, and you know it! Tell 'em you won't stand it!" came the voice of the prompter.

"Suffragette navy!" exclaimed the newest arrival on the yacht's deck. You're way off, Arch. That's the fog whistle on Cape Elizabeth! We couldn't find it, so they've brought it out to us!"

"Yah! You're drunk!" piped the captain, finding his tongue at last. "Tryin' ter pick up a fog whistle on a clear night! Yah!"

The *Monhegan's* heavy main boom suddenly sagged inboard. The vessels were now abreast.

"Heads, Cap'n! We're goin' ter gybe! Hard a-port the yacht!" chorused the *Monhegans.*

The mainsheet did a hop skip-and-jump in the water, flogged the helmsman and whipped taut with a rattling wrench of blocks. The boom, a gigantic flail imbued with life, swept overhead viciously, and struck tremendously at the offending yacht. Like a stout man hit in the stomach her snowy spinnaker collapsed, rent from luff to leach. The great spinnaker boom stood on end for an instant, then cracked in three pieces and bombarded the deck below. The yacht gybed as if in vain retaliation, came-to with a rush and lay fluttering like a bird with a broken wing.

And the captain of the *Monhegan,* oh, where was he? Struck behind the knees by the ribald main-boom he knelt gracefully in mid-air and landed froglike in the water half way between the warring craft. "Ephraim Cutwater, you come back here this minute!" screamed Old Fathom, with instinct born of long practice, but this time the poor man failed to obey. The much-rattled mate speared an oar after him, but whether it brained the skipper or proved the life-preserver it was meant for, none aboard the *Monhegan* could see.

When Eliza and the crew had lowered the center-board, trimmend in the now subdued mainsail, let go the jib sheets, rolled the wheel down, dropped the leaky yawl-boat off the davits by the run, and manned her, the scene of the collision was, as might have been surmised, a cable's-length to windward. The grim coxswain in all probability was already a widow. Whether or not she realized it, she was as stolid as the Sphinx.

They pulled back wearily, each short, hurrying sea, slapping the boat full in the face as if to prepare them gradually for the final rebuff. They searched an empty sea, and then silently returned to the schooner, not deigning to speak the craft responsible for the mischief. She still hung in the wind some distance seaward, apparently clearing away the wreckage.

Old Ephraim had been a pretty decent sort of a chap in spite of his failings, thought the sobered pair at the oars. "Guess he must have been stunded by the boom," ventured the sympathetic mate.

"Yes, and you wait till we git this boat h'isted up ag'in and I'll show ye some of the all-firedest boo-hooin' you ever see!" was the curt reply. Which, the mate decided, was some sentiment for Old Fathom.

The faces of the cook and remaining man grinned over the bulwarks as they drew near. Old Fathom scrambled up the mainchains unaided and grabbed the head of the culinary department by the scruff of the neck. All hands sighed in relief. Richard was himself again.

"What d'ye mean, ye worthless black scum, by laughin' like a hyena at sech a time as this?" she demanded in a voice which again suggested the Cape Elizabeth fog whistle. "Do you wanter go overboard too?"

"Well, suh—I mean marm," stammered the wriggling cook, "dis no-'count Dutchman yere 'lows how he done see a boat from the yacht pick up Little Nemo—I mean de Cap'n, suh—"

"Ya, ya, yust after you leave der ship," corroborated the Dutchman. "Ay tank he not bane hurt—"

Captain Eliza threw the culprit from her with a snort. Then she strode aft and soon had the *Monhegan* under way again, this time pointing for the blinding sun, or the half of it visible above the horizon. Half Way Rock's spiky lighthouse stuck up primly some miles inshore.

The mate saw Old Fathom furtively fling what he took to be a wadded hand-

kerchief as far in the direction of Spain as the lightness of the missile would permit.

The *Free Lance* was just filling away to windward, and the coaster dawdled till she was overtaken again. The breeze was still freshening, but Captain Eliza needed no megaphone. "If you'll let her come-to again, I'll send the boat for my man!" she bellowed, but her voice this time lacked its usual raucous note. "And we'll be much obleeged to ye!"

A portly figure in white flannels jumped on the yacht's rail and held on by the main rigging while he shouted through a cupped hand: "Captain Cutwater presents his compliments, madam, and reports himself as in no condition to resume command of his schooner at present. Moreover, madam, in the process of resuscitation Captain Cutwater accidentally made the acquaintance of a certain brand of wine which has quite taken his fancy, and he desires to continue the tête-à-tête a bit longer." He bowed, flourished his yachting cap elaborately and stepped down, puffiing for breath.

Old Fathom's jaw grew squarer. "He does, hey?" she retorted. "Well, then, you kin take the consequences! You know what kidnapin' means!"

"Oh, be a sport, Lizzie! Give the old man a little breathing spell!" was all the satisfaction she got.

Now a light center-board coaster dead before the wind, with a rapping good whole-sail breeze, is about the slipperiest article in Uncle Sam's fleet of merchant windjammers, and her kind have shown their heels to many an arrogant yacht before now.

In a moderate breeze the *Free Lance* had overhauled the *Monhegan* easily with her giant spinnaker pushing its best. But now her spinnaker, or what was left of it, was reposing in the lazaretto, and it was breezing up smartly. Still her people feared not for her laurels. As a matter of fact she had never taken part in just such a contest. So the sailing master scoffed at Old Fathom's vague threat, and scorned to haul his beautiful craft on the wind, at which kind of sailing she could have cut circles around the old coaster.

The *Monhegan,* with patched sails ballooning and straining and a "bone in her teeth" deep burying her rusty chain bobstay, loomed forebodingly on the yacht's starboard quarter, and slowly drew up in her seething frothy wake.

Brass-bound officers and beflanneled aristocrats on the *Free Lance's* luxurious decks rubbed their eyes and blinked in amazement, marveling at the fluke in the breeze which thus proved the race not always to the swift. Still they applauded her generously. "Come on, old hoss!" they yelled.

Up, up crawled the *Monhegan,* her square-headed old mainsail out to port driving its utmost, and the silent helmswoman steering her finest. Conducive to neat work on her part was the spectacle of her errant husband stamping about insanely on the yacht's deck, and cheering his own craft to victory with a long bottle which glinted in the early sunlight as he waved it wildly. No cup racer in a final heat was ever urged on more heartily.

The *Monhegan's* chubby bow lapped the yacht's main rigging, fore rigging, windlass, stem, bowsprit end. Then Captain Eliza without warning threw her helm hard a-port.

Bang! Rip! Wrench! The big main boom slashed over the *Monhegan's* deck again. It landed fair in the *Free Lance's* faultless white mainsail and made a worse wreck of it than it had a few hours before of her silky spinnaker. Her varnished eighty-foot boom jumped crazily aloft, then stabbed down through the polished cabin and made a still crazier three-master of her. A ravaged club topsail overhead transformed itself into an elephantine flag of truce, whipping mightily on before.

In awful silence the appreciative crew lowered-away the wreck, while the afterguard shook fists, and the stalwart Nemesis on the *Monhegan's* quarter deck hurled epithets unfit for the ear of lady or suffragette. The afflicted yacht was plodding hopelessly along under foresail and gybes as the avenger ranged up alongside again, her crew grinning with delight from ear to ear.

" 'Bout ready to send my man abroad, Mr. J. Alphonso What's Yer-Name?" inquired Captain Eliza with sinister politeness. "Next time I cal'late ter wipe that 'ere toy mahogany launch offn yer port davits, and mebbe put a leetle black stripe along yer hull! Stripes is lucky, ye know!"

A council of war was evidently taking place on the yacht's deck with Cap'n Ephraim as the *piece de resistance.* As far as could be seen from the *Monhegan* he was not wildly excited about its outcome. His bottle, it was observed, he waved with increasing facility.

At length the yacht came slowly into the wind, her long bow dipping deep into the rushing sunlit chop and her remaining canvas threshing thunderously in the lively sou'wester. Captain Eliza promptly hove-to. An oily smoothness to windward marked her drift.

"All right, old woman, come and get your wild man!" shouted one of the *Free Lances* through a megaphone.

"Oh, no, you don't!" returned Old Fathom, with the nearest approach to a smile seen for some time. "Them terms is all off now! You bring him over here or I'll have that shiny launch ter kindle the galley fire with, spite o' fate!"

That was the last straw. A dinghy was promptly yowered in the yacht's lee; Cap'n Ephraim was hustled into it with no great ceremony, and a couple of sturdy seamen buffeted their sprayblown way into windless lee of the wall-sided *Monhegan.*

"Mr. Martingale wanted me to tell ye, ma'am, that any time ye wanted a job as sailing master, just let him know," grinned the stroke oar. "I reckon you'd find us a willin' crew," he added.

"You tell yer Mister Martingale that he owes me for a new main sheet!" returned the unmoved object of this flattery. "I stranded mine that last wallop I give him."

They did the returned prodigal the honor of lowering him a rope ladder, and he was gaffed overside with plenty of help from both above and below. The truant leered brazenly at his lady, and said conciliatingly, "You was right about not goin' inter Porchmith last night, Lizy. Yer most allus right, Lizy."

She, however, overlooked his maudlin levity and pointed silently toward the cabin door. This phenomenon might portend anything. Captain Ephraim looked fearfully over his shoulder and then wobbled hastily cabinward.

Majestic Seguin soon shrunk blue over the stern. Off the gray granite Cuckolds the faithful mainsail was hauled down as the *Monhegan* shivered in the wind's eye for a minute, and she went into Boothbay Harbor still a-boiling. Old Fathom put the finishing touches to her triumph by deftly anchoring in a tangle of small craft behind McFarland's Island, while Cap'n Ephraim grinned idiotic approval from the companionway.

"Jest one thing, Lizy," he offered, emboldened by his sojourn with the idle rich, " 't ain't never a good idee to gybe her in a fresh breeze. Better to let her come-to 'n' fill away on the other nail—other tack—other tack."

"When I want any of your advice, Ephraim Cutwater, I'll ask for it, and you know it!" answered Old Fathom.

Extract from shipping columns of following day's New York paper:

"Spoken: June 13, off Seguin, schooner yacht *Free Lance,* Nassau for Bar Harbor, 17 days out. Reports experienced heavy weather in Gulf Stream and lost minor sails and spars. All on board well and wished to be reported. By schooner *Monhegan,* at Boothbay."

THE MARBLE MEDIUM

By OSCAR LEWIS

GENTLE reader, did you ever carry a hundred-and-forty pound hod up three flights of tapering ladders? Did you ever push a wheelbarrow full of mortar up a plank that bears down at you from a thirty-degree angle? Did you ever dip a hoe into a steaming trough of slaking lime? If you have done these things, did you keep it up nine hours a day and twenty-seven days a month? Did you?

If so, how did you spend the other four days? Did you read helpful books? Did you attend the church on the rise of the hill or the band concert in the park? And did you now and then draw your young daughter—who was your little girl but the day before yesterday—down on the low stool beside you and stroke her hair, which she no longer wears in pig-tails, and smile down into her eyes and laugh with her and talk with her, and to her, and about her?

In short, did you make her understand that this father person was a human being and a friend and that he might care really, and caring—be interested? Did you do these things on those days that were not of the twenty-seven? Did you? Jim O'Neil didn't. He got drunk.

And because he got drunk on his days off and became fixed in his daughter's mind as the "Old Man" when he might have been Dad, because he did this, he crowned with a great happiness a life that otherwise would almost certainly have been drab, dull—surely stupid.

Had it ever occurred to Cassy O'Neil to regard her only parent as anything beyond the stolid person who slept in the big bed nights and who shuffled out wearily each morning and shuffled in still more wearily ten hours later, and who was the direct cause for sundry meals and endless cleanings up—had it occurred to her to look upon her father differently, she probably would have become friendly with him, for he was really a good sort, and finally confidential. Then there would have been an awful rumpus, and Jim O'Neil would have sworn earnestly, and his daughter's life would not have known the great happiness.

Jim O'Neil's way of living did not tend toward the development of a broad outlook upon life. He was not of the thinkers. He worked with his head only infrequently and the result was never wholly satisfying. He handled thoughts clumsily. He could not range them systematically nor pile nor sift them logically. They were cumbersome things to be mawed over laboriously, deliberately, and always one at a time. He was heavy, clouded, dull—and unsurmountably, unalterably prejudiced.

His daughter Cassy, on the other hand, was something of a philosopher. Her surroundings, habit of environment—everything—made for a serious view of life, for solemnity. Materialism that was pitilessly uninspired made life a bare, sober reality. There was nothing to encourage the spectacles of rosy hue. Yet Cassy, in the midst of this atmosphere, was blithe, airy, winsome. She was on this account no strange phenomenon, no rose springing from a garbage heap, nor any such freak. She was just a blithe, young human being who was being blithe and young and human; and

if Jim O'Neil had asked her on that first Sunday evening what she had been doing, she would have told him unhesitatingly.

But Jim O'Neil did not ask her on that Sunday evening, nor on any of the evenings succeeding. When finally he did find out, the thing had been going on for four weeks to the day, and the person who told him was not Cassy at all.

John Kelsey was probably little versed in the technique of the dramatic denouement. When he had some news to tell, however, he generally managed to deliver its full value.

"Wonder if Jim's girl has made him acquainted with her Bohemian friends yet. Has she, Jim?"

It was early in the evening. The sawdust on the floor was just beginning to be kicked under the card tables and the floor itself kept a perfectly even keel. There was only one row of buttons on the bartender's coat and it was clear that this was no time for foolish argument. Jim O'Neil must have five beers before he could talk. And he was only beginning his third.

"Of course it ain't none of my affair," continued John Kelsey with vast seriousness, "but as a man of family myself, I say to you, Jim O'Neil, that you can't be too careful. Cassy's been a good girl and a dutiful girl and when the wife tells me as how she's been going down to Samson Street every day for the last month and being sculped, I says that it was a shame and that the next time I saw Jim O'Neil I'd tell him so.

" 'You and me and Jim O'Neil is one kind of folks,' I tells the wife, 'and Cassy's like us. And these painters and sculptors is another kind altogether, and Cassy's devilish pretty.' And, I says to her, 'you can mark my word, there ain't going to be no good come of it.'

" 'Oh, it ain't so bad,' says the wife. 'Cassy tells me as how she gets lonesome staying alone in the house all day. And then these friends are all so nice to her. The child likes to be noticed, and besides, it pleased the dear to have her pretty face copied.'

" 'Face,' I repeats, 'hum-m-m! Wife, it's little you know of it.'

" 'John,' says she quickly, 'John, what do you mean?" '

" 'Nothing at all,' says I. 'Remember the time we went to the museum at Golden Gate Park?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'you saw the statues.'

"The wife didn't answer for a minute. Just stood and looked. 'John,' she says finally, speaking kind of soft like, for she and Cassy was good friends, 'John, it's a shame.'

" 'It is, indeed,' I tells her."

Jim O'Neil had said not a word. But he was not at ease. Something warned him that he was not following all that John Kelsey was saying. He raised his thick glass slowly, thinking painfully. And then the glass stopped and Jim O'Neil held it poised, its brim level with his chin, while realization slowly came to him. Very slowly and carefully he set the glass down upon the damp bar. Very carefully and slowly he laid a dime and two nickles down beside it.

An then he walked out, head tilted forward, eyes on the floor; very quietly and very deliberatly, but with menace in the rolling slump of his shoulders.

Cassy O'Neil, sleeve rolled up above a dimpled elbow, dipped and inquiring hand into the soapy warm water of the dish pan, rotated it, and pulled out a final fork. The she poured the water out and tilted the empty pan against the side of the sink. The water coasted down the drain, surprising the air somewhere below and driving it out with a swishy, sucking sound, a sound that prevented Cassy's hearing the soft opening and closing of the outer door.

She picked up the drying towel and was reaching for a cup when a quick, unfamiliar step in the short hall caused her to turn.

In the threshold bulked the form of

her father. His eyes looked into hers and there was that in their expression which caused a fear-tightening of her throat. She fell back a few indecisive steps and at this confession of fear, Jim O'Neil advanced into the room. He moved quickly and not awkwardly, and there was about him something of finality, something that suggested the inexorable workings of a great basic law; inflexible, stern, and yet impartial, more terrible than sinister, and merciless rather than cruel.

Cassy, hands gripping the edge of the table behind her, raised to her father's, a face that was frankly frightened. He, noting nothing, took her by the arm and led her half resistingly into the other room. There she sat on the extreme edge of her small bed and regarded him silently. Slowly and with stolid face he pulled from the back of the closet a wicker telescope basket. This he placed on the floor and into it emptied the contents of the upper drawer of the oak veneered dresser. With this he placed the two or three dresses from the closet. Finally he added some articles—comb, brush and mirror—from the top of the dresser and with them he, after some hesitation, placed a small picture in a dented silver frame. The picture was of Cassy's mother. He then fitted the cover on and strapped it down, tucking the ends under the strap and out of the way.

Taking the basket from the floor, he motioned for her to precede him out into the hall. Her coat and little black velvet hat hung on the tiny hall rack. He took them down and passed them to her one by one.

"Put them on," he said.

It was the first word that he had spoken. Cassy had said nothing whatever, though she once or twice raised her hand and brushed it waveringly across her forehead.

She put on the coat and hat, and when he opened the door, stepped outside. He set the basket down in the entry beside her and closing the door, bolted it. He stood still for a moment until he heard her turn the door knob and soon after go slowly down the steps. Then he went back to the kitchen.

It could not have been more than a week or so later that Jim O'Neil paid a visit to the home of a prominent millionaire. His purpose was not social, but business. Jim O'Neil understood this perfectly and allowed the servant to lead him through devious hallways and paths to a white building in the midst of the battlemented garden.

The place was fitted with a magnificence that took his breath away, but when the servant entered boldly into it, Jim took a firmer grasp upon his box of tools and materials and followed in his wake.

In an alcove off the great main room, they came upon a not very large group of men and women standing before a cylindrical column of white cloth.

This, though Jim O'Neil could not be expected to know it, was a rather important event that took place from time to time within the white building on the millionaire's grounds. Its importance lay in this: whenever this group was gathered here, it meant that the millionaire had secured something else worthy of adding to his collection of American art.

It was probably due to the millionaire's native courtesy, and not, as many thought, because of his fondness for giving a theatrical tinge to his deeds, that he always chose this means of making the acquisition public. Surely it could have been nothing but courtesy that prompted him to invite these critics to view and to pass upon his judgment. And to pass judgment was really what they did, for it was always after they had expressed approval of the work, that its real, its actual addition to the collection took place—that the painting was bracketed to the wall or the statue sealed

to its base. As to the miniature unveiling that preceded this, well, perhaps the millionaire's leaning toward the mildly spectacular was evident here.

The servant halted Jim O'Neil at a decently respectful distance and there bade him wait.

The millionaire, a reasonably young appearing man with a satisfying brown Vandyke, was talking.

"Clara Boone, to my mind," he was saying, "has never done anything finer. The spirit that she has caught here does not seem to be something which she deliberately set out to obtain. It makes one feel rather that she found these things actually existing somewhere and they so delighted her that she copied them down with a joyful fidelity. The refreshing, unconscious grace, the exquisite purity of youth and beauty, the sheer, airy winsomeness of it, seem to be inherently a part of the subject."

This much Jim O'Neil heard, but the words held no interest for him and his thoughts drifted afield. He wondered if his cement had begun to harden yet. He was afraid that it would if he had much longer to wait before going to work. But when he looked again, the millionaire was pulling the cord that swept the cloth aside and revealed the statue.

Jim O'Neil's part in the ceremony was to seal the statue to its place. There was about its base a groove that was to be filled out, making it flush with the oval base. That groove, his trowel and the cement, were the only things that directly concerned him. There was nothing else. The elation engendered by art, he did not know. Yet the statue held his attention.

And the statue merited the wrapt attention that he gave it. Gay and vivid and fresh as an ocean-blown breeze, was this girl-figure that lightly knelt upon the sloping marble turf. Life flowed from it; head tilted with the alert grace of the wood sprite; all tense, wild, vital, windblown; breathing of that convincing joy of youth. Pure it was as the marble from which it was created, and Jim O'Neil knew it to be very, very beautiful. He knew it even as he knew that in form, in spirit, in the very mute appeal of presence, the statue was Cassy.

"There is a certain lingering sweetness about it—"

Cassy's father desired greatly to hear what the millionaire had to say, but there was something else that he desired more. And it was this something that drew him away into the millionaire's garden, and beyond.

It was through Clara Boone that he found Cassy. It was the sculptress who had taken her in, and it was she who led Jim O'Neil to Cassy's room and opened the door for him to pass inside.

"Say, Kid, I guess we didn't understand each other very well," said Jim O'Neil as he pushed back his plate that evening.

It was Saturday night and the supper was through, yet he remained at the table puffing at his pipe and sending white rivulets coursing and expanding toward the ceiling.

Cassy sniffed comfortably at a film of smoke that had ebbed over toward her.

"Say, Dad," she asked, "when two people know all about each other, and haven't any secrets between them, are good friends, and never believe the things they hear about each other, except the good things—and—well, what do you call 'em Dad?"

"Pals," Jim O'Neil replied promptly. "There's only one word to describe them, and that's 'pals!'" And then he leaned over the table and spoke into Cassy's eyes. "Say, Kid, that's what we two will be—pals."

PASSED BY

By LOWELL EDWIN HARDY

KENO BAR lies in a little pocket in the Sierras, on the edge of Bear River, where Moody's Ridge and the rocky slope of Lowell Hill Divide come together. At night, from the top of the grade coming in on the old stage road from Red Dog, the weary traveler can see far below him the cluster of its lights beckoning him on to warmth and cheer.

In days gone by, Keno Bar, surrounded by rich diggings and conveniently located for travel, was the most prosperous mining camp in California. Its hotels and business places were crowded, and the double row of saloons, gambling houses and dance halls that stretched the length of Main street, from Ferguson's Opera House down to the Fashion Stables, with its black-and-white checkerboard front, at the lower end of the steep, rocky thoroughfare, were open day and night. The sound of the piano, the whirl of the wheel and the rattle of dice were unceasing.

But this was long ago. Keno Bar is dead. The changes of fortune that come to mining camps in the end left the town deserted and forsaken, its prosperity gone forever. The abandoned shafts, washed-out placers and rotting sluice-boxes stand unworked and untended. The empty houses and stores are falling down, crushed by the snow that has measured fifteen feet in the middle of a hard winter, and the few saloons and one hotel still remaining drag out a precarious and waning existence.

This was a Saturday night and Main street was deserted. A half dozen miners in from their claims over on the American and some few freighters on their way across the summit, staying the night in town, made up the roisterers. It was raining, a cold, sleety drizzle that would turn to snow by morning, and all were indoors. From the New Orleans Saloon and Jim Dunn's place farther up the street come the rattle of poker-chips on tables, the scraping of chairs and heavily-booted feet, and an occasional rough voice singing.

There was but one figure on the street. It was of a man who had halted just outside the dim circle of illumination that radiated from the window of the pioneer Drug Store on the corner. He stood listening for some minutes to the sounds, of revelry, then, casting a quick glance down each side of the street drew his coat collar closer about his neck, pulled the brim of his hat farther down over his eyes, and struck out toward the lower end of town. He walked as though shunning observation, keeping to the middle of the street and avoiding the patches of yellow light that were thrown across the narrow way by the kerosene lamps hung from the ceilings of the saloons.

Beyond these, on each side, rows of blank-faced deserted stores and buildings gave the place an atmosphere of death and ghostly desolation. His footsteps sounded and resounded between them, and he glanced curiously at these vacant, staring fronts as he passed, looking upon them with a reminiscent air. But it was only when he found himself beneath the bridge over the street, connecting the two wings of the old Golden

Eagle Hotel, that he slackened his pace. Staring up at the old building, his gaze rested for a time upon the corner suite of the first-floor front that had once been the pride of the famous hostelry.

He passed on. At the lower end of the street he turned sharply to the left and stumbled down a narrow lane. Ahead was a light. He bent his head to the drizzle and walked steadily toward it. He was now past all chance of meeting any one who would identify him.

There was but one cabin in the gulch below. It was that of "Old Kate," outcast of the town. But for the single light in the window the lane was in darkness. As he came nearer he slackened his pace and halted at the gate.

Above him, across the gulch at the top of the hill, another lamp burned from a room in the rear of the big, ornate residence of Jim Toland, the banker and mine owner of the town, where the caretaker lived alone keeping watch over the property since the family had moved to San Francisco. The man before the little cabin stood silent for a minute or two gazing up at the light, then turned and opened the gate.

His knock on the thin door startled him with its loudness. From within came a hurried shuffling of feet. The knob turned and the door opened. A woman, her lean, bent figure draped in a cheap calico dress, with a dingy shawl drawn over her shoulders, stood back from the threshold with a lamp held high above her head. The fingers that held the lamp were stiff and knotted. The hair, thin and streaked, was drawn back from her face, that, despite the marks that age and dissipation had both left there, still held in dim outline traces of comeliness. She strained forward, and the cords in her neck stood out as she peered into the dark.

"Who's there?" she queried, in a voice that was flat and hard. "What d'yu want this time of night?"

The man did not at once reply. He was staring into the gaunt, hard-featured face that showed glaringly under the rays of the lamp—at the thin neck, and the pink ribbon that was tied in a bow beneath the turned-down collar of her gown.

"Good-evening, Kittie. Don't you know me? I'm Dave—Dave Colgrove." He laughed, a trifle embarrassed. "Aren't you going to let me in?"

There was a moment's pause, then the woman in the doorway made a strange, high sound in her throat, and the lamp flared as she put her hand suddenly forward. She caught at the edge of the door.

"Why—why, yes—of course, Dave. Come in." Her hand went up to the collar of her dress. "Sure. I—I'm glad to see you." She crouched back against the door, holding it wide, her eyes fixed upon his face. He took a step into the room and stood looking about him.

She turned from closing the door and their eyes met. She laughed a little hysterically.

"'Tain't much of a place to come to, Dave, but you're welcome, such as it is. It's not much like our—my old quarters." She stopped suddenly and an unwonted smile grew upon her face. "Seems kinder funny to see you here."

"Yes. That's so, Kit. It's been a long time—twenty years, I guess." He was standing in the center of the room, his coat collar still upturned and the drops of rain glistening on his white mustache and closely trimmed, curly beard. His gaze wandered about the room, from the cheap, scant furniture and worn rag carpet on the floor to the few prints tacked up on the walls, until it rested upon a picture that stood on the mantle-shelf over the fireplace. He stared at it long and closely.

It was a large oil portrait in a heavy, tarnished gold frame, looking strangely out of place with the other furnishings.

It was the likeness of a man taken in the prime of life, of bold, confident demeanor, and dressed in the height of the fashion of twenty years ago. A pair of cool, steady blue eyes looked out from under a smooth brow, surmounted by a high mass of curling brown hair—the portrait of a man whose world was going just about to thiş liking. The man gazing at the picture turned with an easy, amused laugh, and passed his hand over his head of thick, waving, silver hair and on down to stroke his beard.

"I used to be quite a blood in those days, Kit," he said, and looked after her with the same bright, clear blue eyes that were yet undaunted, as she moved to place the lamp on the crocheted mat in the center of the table. Her shawl had slipped from her shoulders and a bit of color showed in her faded cheeks. She turned to meet his gaze that was taking in every detail of her person. The woman in her saw his mind as an open book and she flushed again.

"That was a long time ago, Dave," she reminded him, and stopped. "Have a cheer." She pushed a worn plush rocker toward him. "It's a mighty poor thing to offer you," she apologized, "but I reckon it'll have to do. There was a time once when my rooms was furnished sorter different, back in the old Golden Eagle days, when things was coming our way."

"Yes, yes, that's so, Kit," he answered. He seated himself in the rocker and put his hat on the floor beside him where it shone wet in the lamplight, and turned down the collar of his coat. "Those were flush times and we had things about the way we wanted them," then dropping his voice suddenly, "not but what you're fixed comfortable enough here," glancing about the room, avoiding her gaze.

He cleared his throat.

"You er—who provides this place for you? Did—is it your own?"

"*He* gave it to me." Her voice was small and cringing. Then plucking up courage, "I—Jim treated me square, always. Nothing was too good for me while it lasted, and he gave me this place in the end. He looked after me, too, for a while. Whenever I needed it bad I could always get some money up at the bank. Them was his orders. But he's married now and has a family—they don't live here any more. He done well. The woman he married wasn't anything extra smart but she was straight all right, and she's made him a good wife. He's got to be a mighty rich man now and they say he's goin' to be United States Senator."

The one in the rocking-chair laughed grimly.

"So I've heard. He was always lucky ever since he was a boy. Everything Jim Toland touched turned to gold and he held onto it. With me it used to come in bunches, but it went just as fast and finally it quit coming. Do you know what I've been doing last?"

"No, I never 've heard a word from you in these twenty years."

"Well, I've been cooking over in a mine on the American River for forty dollars a month and grub." He spoke without malice and the blue eyes looked straight out at her, amused.

She stared back at him without speaking, her glance encompassing every detail of his appearance, from his wet, shabby coat down to the rain-soaked boots and the felt hat, limp with age and moisture, that lay on the floor beside him. The man moved uneasily under her scrutiny and gave a conscious laugh.

"I guess both of our circumstances have changed some since the Golden Eagle days," he agreed. "You remember, Kit, when I used to own both the big stage lines to You Bet and Red Dog, and over to Lowell Hill; when I've stood a hundred and fifty head of horses in the old Fashion Stables and taken in a thousand dollars cash in one day? That was living! Why, Kit, we've spent more on one dinner than I earn now

for a month's work. Do you remember?"

"Yes, Dave."

They were both silent for a minute, each regarding the other with that calm, unoffending interest that comes with years. He was the first to speak. He cleared his throat again with something of an effort and looked down at the floor.

"I heard you've been having hard luck —that you've been sick."

"Yes—I was, a while back. I reckon I'm all right now."

"That's what I came to see you about. I hate to think of you being up against it and having to go without anything, especially when you're sick."

"Old Doc Hammond always let me have medicine from the drug store when I needed it, but he's gone now. A new man has it."

"Yes. So I heard. I—it looks as if we were going to have a hard winter this year—snow's going to come early, and we're getting along to where we feel the cold more'n we used to." He hesitated, moving his hands nervously.

"I—er, can't do very much for you, Kit—not what I'd like to, but I've been up to the drug store and fixed it with the new man so's you can get whatever you need, and it'll be all right. I just wanted to be sure you wouldn't have to go without medicines and things." He waited a minute. She did not speak.

"I'd like to do something more substantial, Kit," with a curious shade of embarrassment, "but that's about my limit. It isn't much of a limit, is it?"

"Thanks, Dave." Her voice was shaky, and a light that had been gone from them for years burned in the faded eyes. "You're not bounden to do anything for me now. You and me was never married, and it was me that left you. You—you," her glance swept over him again. "I reckon you need all you've got without me." She got up suddenly and walked across the room to a small, cloth-covered box that stood in the corner. She raised the lid, drew out a bundle, and advanced toward him. A strong odor of lavender filled the room.

"Here are some heavy flannels of yours, Dave. They're kinder old but they're warm. I been a-fixin' them over at odd times when—when I didn't have anything else to do and they're all in good shape." She passed a stiffened hand over the soft, gray woolens. "You never had an' but the best in them days and I kept the moths out. There's three suits of them and they'd oughter last you through the winter. Be sure and change if one gets wet; you always was turrible careless about takin' cold."

She stepped over to a cardboard rack that hung on the wall, took from it a folded newspaper and spread it out upon the table and rolled the bundle tight.

"Thank you, Kit," he said gravely and gently, as he took the package from her hands and reached down for his hat. "I guess I'll have to be going now." He rose from his chair, coughed resolutely and turned toward the door. "I'm mighty glad to've seen you again just for the sake of old times—brings back the days of my youth. I guess it'll be about the last talk we'll have, too. Neither of us are as young as we once were, and I'm going 'below' now to stay. My brother wants me to come down and live with him."

"I'm glad, Dave," she said quickly. "I'll feel a lot more comfortable about you to know you've got some one to look out for you. Has he got a wife?"

"Sure, he has, as fine a little woman as you've ever seen, and kids too, a boy and a girl." His eyes glistened. "They're the greatest pair of little tykes in the country. The boy's named after me."

She was watching his face with a hungry look in her eyes.

"And you—you ain't never married?" she questioned, her breath stilled while she waited his answer.

"No. I've always gone it alone, Kit." His eyes were smiling. "I came pretty near it once, a good many years ago and maybe, if I'd—well, there's no use talking about it now. Something happened that sort of changed things a good deal just then and I've never gotten around to it since. Kind of got out of the notion, I guess." He was staring down at the floor, his eyes kept sedulously from hers. "I'm glad Jim Toland did the right thing by you. He'd ought to've. I thought once, maybe he'd marry you."

He stood for a moment shifting his hat between his hands. Suddenly he gave an odd little laugh and looked up into her face. "Do you know, Kit, I was figuring on marrying you, myself, once. You were the girl. I had it all planned out, and that night you and Jim—you remember. Well, that night you went with him I had the license all ready in my pocket. Was going to surprise you with it—and you were gone. Funny, wasn't it?"

He thought she made a sound that was assent, and he moved toward the door. She was still standing where she had risen, with one hand pressed against her thin, flat chest, her eyes fixed upon his face. When she spoke her voice was strained.

"About that time, Dave, when—about that marrying," she pleaded, "if the girl —if I'd a-known, do you think it would a-made any difference? It wasn't Jim—I didn't know."

He was at the door, ready to go. His man's interest in the subject had abated.

"O, yes—maybe it would. I don't know. That was a long time ago, and not worth worrying about now." He was fastening the buttons of his coat. "It's going to be a cold night. There'll be snow before morning."

She took up the lamp from the table and crossing the room, opened the door, holding it wide. He stepped out onto the porch. Then he turned.

"Well, good night, Kit," he said, and there was a note of relief in his voice. "I won't keep you standing there in the cold. It's coming on to snow, now. Take care of yourself!"

"Sure! I will. Good night, Dave," came the woman's voice while he fumbled with the latch.

"Good night. I'm all right now. Go on inside."

She held the light for him until the gate clicked and she heard his footfalls die away up the rocky street, then she closed the door softly, walked back to the table and placed the lamp on the crocheted mat in the center. She straightened up again and stood still for a moment, staring at the blank wall before her, head bent a little forward and her eyes wide as though seeing something that was far away, in a dream. She moved forward a step, and suddenly her knees gave way. She sat down in the rocking-chair beside the table and put both her hands on its edge, and laid her face between them.

A man who is married and has three or four children doesn't have to look for investments. They just seem to come to him.—*New York Evening Mail.*

GETTING IT

By FREDERIC R. BUCKLEY

THE peculiar attitude of the perfectly friendly officers of the Leviathan, as they sat in that steamship's cabin under the smoky oil-lamp, each with a revolver pointed in the general direction of the other, was only one of the things about that dishevelled two-thousand-tonner that needed explanation.

The port authorities of San Pablo, for instance, would have appreciated an official explanation of why the battered looking old tramp that had lain up for repairs to her engines had left so quietly in the night, just before the De Corza revolutionists started up with such astounding quantities of ammunition. The port authorities were asking for these explanations by cable, over several thousand miles of sea, at the time the ship lay quietly at her berth in Brooklyn. The fact that the Leviathan was, in those cables, insulted by the title of the Bubbling Wave, seemed to worry her officers not at all. With a bottle of kümmel between them on the table, they were working for the welfare of the crew.

"And after all, Sven," growled Captain Webster through his whiskers, "you have to say that the long barrel gives you more accuracy. It must. And then—the moral effect! You baboon! A fine lot of bums we'd look, roaming the high seas with nothing better than your sawn-off peashooters! It's hard times when mariner-men have to pack guns for the sake of their wives and children; but they have to; and by gar! they shall have good guns while they're at it. There shan't be a gun-barrel less than nine inches long on this ship, Sven Kill—not a one. You can use that there plaything of yours for a paper-weight."

The big Swede eyed with disfavor the huge Colt with which the captain tapped the table in emphasis of his remark.

"Dey are so ugly," he said; "so handless; and dey so bulge de pocket—"

"You ain't goin' to take tea with the Queen of Sweden with yer gun on," said the captain sarcastically.

"I don't move it quick enough, again," protested Sven; "somehow it strains me at the wrist. I don't blow off his head at a moment. I don't like."

"You just show a man one of these things," said the captain, tapping the demi-cannon persuasively on the table, "and you don't have to blow off his head—not unless so be as he's contumelious, as the good book says. He caves in. It scares him. But that teaspoon of yours—he'd try pitching pennies into it. He'd inquire if you could be hired for the Fourth. No, sir. My crew shall shed as little of the gallows-warrant as possible; they shall carry big guns. You can keep that thing of yours for use in private life, if you wanta; but you don't use it in my business. I need dividends."

The mate filled a glass of kümmel. He was a man of few words. The captain was not. Since Sven had said all he could, and since he knew that the captain was only just getting in form for the reaching of arguments from the earth and sky and the waters under the earth, he gave in—ungraciously.

"You der master are," he said. "Hand out your guns. Dey may look fierce, but dey don't shoot."

Only full conversion ever satisfied the captain. He proceeded with his arguments and the distribution of the kümmel.

He had reached the point at which he was telling Kill that nothing in the world would induce him to force any views upon anyone contrary to their conscientious convictions, when his mate fell gently asleep. His much-disputed bulldog revolver still lay on the table in his grasp; but it had to do its arguing for itself. Sven Kill, with kümmel, was outward bound for dreamland.

Captain Webster, in whose brain, also, the cordial was beginning to take effect, stood up and regarded, through the skylight, a patch of shimmering stars in the sky above the river. He cast one glance at his slumbering opponent, and walked toward the companion ladder. A little of the night air would cool him. The cabin, he had already decided, was too stuffy for a man who would, within a few weeks, need all his wits about him to carry out a risky enterprise. He was crossing the gangway when he realized that his nine-inch barreled pistol was still in his hand. Absently, he stuffed it into the side pocket of his pea-jacket.

"They won't arrest a family man," he told himself dreamily, "with whiskers and a face like mine, for carrying a gun in this part of the city. It they do, I can say, 'Cap'n Webster; fifty-seven; white; S. S. Leviathan; married; not murderous.' That'll do it."

He turned to watch the arch of Brooklyn Bridge, with its crawling lights and their counterparts in the water beneath. Few tugs were around; the water looked untroubled. The commerce of the river had been overtaken by the calm which very rarely falls upon it, even so late at night as this—the midnight hour. The captain decided to take a stroll over the bridge. Perhaps he would return by the ferry.

Captain C. V. B. Webster was of the type of mariner not given to deep reflection on any matters not brought by circumstance immediately under his slightly red-rugged nose. He had a certain beautiful practicality which the addition of alcohol in its more concentrated solutions served only to render more evident. It was part of his philosophy to consider seriously the exact section of any circumstances in which he might find himself. As he neared the New York end of the bridge he was glowering into his whiskers over the problem of the increased cost of living—the particular application of the problem which applied to him. The fact was, the Leviathan had to make more money, and that quickly.

Mr. Webster and his mate of the ominous name had decided on a more lucrative method then the humdrum business of transporting goods from one point to another; that section of the problem was forgotten. What worried him now was the thought that in order to embark on her new career, she would need equipment of a peculiar nature; mainly accoutrements for the crew, and an artillery-adornment for a certain secluded portion of the deck; all of which would cost money.

The treasury of the Leviathan, that commonwealth among ships, was in a decidedly depleted condition, boasting exactly three dollars and fifteen cents. So that the aspect of the higher-cost-of-living problem, which occupied the captain, resolved into the blank question, "Where am I going to get some money?" In order to give this the clear-headed consideration which it deserved, Captain Webster had taken this walk. Whether the July air was not sufficiently bracing, or the kümmel had been a little stronger even than usual, his head did not clear so easily as he expected. He turned a dark and clammy corner into East Third Street, remarking to himself that he was "woozy."

Save for a mild fight that was proceeding a block away, and the common

noises of sirens and the tackle-blocks of cranes, early morning saw perfect quiet in East Third Street. The windows of the tenement houses which towered up into the ten-mile deep blue sky, were dark. Their darkness brought a feeling of pleasant isolation to Captain Webster. Here was the place for a pipe and a little quiet consideration; besides, his head might feel clearer if he sat down a while.

The mud of the street squashed for a moment around his decided bootsoles, and he sat down, back against the wall of a cement yard on the north side of the street.

A passing policeman, catching a glimpse of the bearded face lit by the glow of the pipe-bowl, crossed the street, one hand in hip pocket, to investigate. Peculiar things, not altogether unconnected with incendiarism and bombs, are liable to happen in East Third Street.

"Y' better move off there," remarked the policeman. "Stand up, and let's have a look at y'."

Captain Webster trained two bright eyes into the glare of the flash-lamp.

"I'm harmless," he said; "and if it's all the same to you, I'd like a moment's peace. Webster—captain of the Leviathan, yonder. I'm just sitting here. It's all right."

The apparent respectability of his garb reassured the officer.

"What y' doin'?" he asked.

A gentle dignity, born of drink in moderation, possessed the captain.

"I am contemplating the heavens," he replied. "I feel a little tired."

"Y' better go home," said the officer, and passed on smiling.

Captain Webster was as dimly conscious of his going as he had been of his presence. What obsessed him was the thought of equipping a whole crew with big revolvers that would terrify, and fixing on the foredeck of the Leviathan, (or Bubbling Wave or Arethusa Jane), a coy but effective gun of some sort. Perhaps, he decided, an honest living might be made with the aid of the revolvers alone; but three dollars and fifteen cents—

Something caught his eye.

Against the blackness of the tenement house across the street, blazed a bright square of yellow—a lighted window with the blind down, he told himself; and from the general direction of this lighted square came a peculiar sound. It was as if a number of men were saying the same thing over and over in subdued voices. As he watched, shadows began to fall on the blind, as though a procession were passing it. The shadows of the men were so clearly defined that he could perceive that they held in their hands objects that looked like daggers. Some of them had tridents. One had an axe, which he flourished as he passed the curtain.

The thoughts of Captain Webster dropped suddenly from revolvers to earth.

"That's funny," he observed.

The procession continued, and Captain Webster watched it with a curiosity that finally bordered on indignation. He was a Mason himself; and this looked to him, in his slightly elevated condition, like some discreditable distortion of the ancient craft.

"I'll go and look into this," he murmured.

Slowly he gathered himself together, rose to his feet and crossed the road. It required a little exploring to find the door of the house. When he reached the stairs, he found they were dark, and crooked, and most unholy-smelling. There was a greasy feel on the banisters which made the captain more indignant than ever with the pageantists above. The Leviathan might be falling to pieces, as the marine insurance inspector had said when he last looked her over at her owner's request; but at least she was clean. Captain Webster spat eloquently on the stairs and applied an adjective to the inhabitants of the house.

He reached the fourth floor, panting, and stopped to listen for sounds of the procession; all that came to his ear was the sound of a heavy snore. Evidently the noise of the lodge in session did not carry well inside the building. Merely as a precautionary measure, he drew from his pocket the mighty Colt and made the cylinder spin clicking around.

He ascended another flight and listened.

From above he seemed to hear the faint likeness of the monotone. Over the smell of garlic and general cooking another odor, faint and penetrating, came to him.

He sniffed it with disgust.

"Incense!" he said. "Oh, gar!"

It was on the eighth floor he found them, busily intoning; and, as far as he could judge by the gentle shuffling of slippered feet behind the door, still marching slowly around. The idea annoyed him. He was tired and out of breath; and in the back of his brain had formed a definite message which he desired to deliver to the Grand Master in person, having first assured him it would take but a moment of his time. Having got this message fixed above the high-water-mark of the surging kümmel, he knocked at the door. It was designed to be a hard, firm, summoning knock, suggestive of police; but, as it reached the panel, it was merely a succession of taps. Captain Webster was annoyed. He raised his fist and smote heavily on the thin wood.

The shuffling sound had stopped at the first tap. Now, after the final bump, he heard the slither of feet approaching the door. There was a slight delay. The captain grew still more annoyed. He would deliver the message as soon as he clapped eyes on any member of this singularly disgraceful lodge.

A light flashed upon him. A square foot of the door resolved itself into an opening, through which protruded a rather grimy hand. A voice said something in a foreign tongue. It seemed to be asking a question.

Captain Webster delivered the message that hung on the tip of his tongue. It was not so clearly enunciated as he would have liked.

"You—gotohell," he said. As the hand still lingered, he hit it with his revolver-barrel. Then he awaited the chance to fight everybody concerned.

To his intense surprise, the hand was withdrawn not rapidly, but as if it had been expecting the blow and was now satisfied. In a minute it reappeared, holding out to the waiting captain a large envelope, the string fastening of which was supplemented by a dozen big red seals.

"Gar!" said the captain under his breath. He took the package. The hand was withdrawn. He could hear noises which indicated that a number of men were clustering up to the inside of the door. As he stood there, his big gun drooping in his hand, a wailing chant, like unto the concert of many cats, fell on his ear. It seemed to be reiterating some question in the weird language he had heard at first. At last it stopped. The singers seemed to await some reply.

He let them wait a moment. He would teach them to serenade him.

He repeated his former remark, more clearly, more loudly, and twice.

A pained silence fell upon the lodge. Then arose a mighty hubbub. The next instant, the door was flung wide open and a horde of men burst out. They waved gleaming steel and shrieked. They had but two yards to cover to be at the captain's throat; but the South Seas train a man to rapid action. Before one of those daggers could approach him more nearly than the doorsill, Captain Webster, revolver in hand, was four steps down from that landing, plunging recklessly downstairs. As he went, he thought to his sobered self that this was a dern nice thing to happen to a peaceful man.

As he turned cyclonically into the landing where he had heard the heavy snore, something bright clattered from above to the boards at his feet.

"Throwing knives," he muttered; and classified his pursuers, "Wops."

They were after him hard. The rushing feet of the mob, and their remarkably husky yells, were very close behind when he took the last flight of steps at one leap and stumbled into the street. He was up in an instant; and the first of his pursuers saw him disappearing around a corner of the cement-yard building. The chase followed, with a roar; but when it reached the corner, Captain C. V. B. Webster was not in sight.

He listened to the excited council of war from behind the rampart of empty sacks which was masking his examination of the package. Quite sobered, but very curious now, he broke the seal and removed the contents of the envelope.

Astonishment, awe, and wonder, came into his eyes. There was a moment of silence in the dark corner, and then, with an irrepressible yell of joy, Webster arose and, with the speed of lightning, was past the group of counselling pursuers, speeding up the street again. He noticed as he passed that they still held their knives, and muttered to himself a profane prayer that their armories did not include firearms.

They were after him.

He dodged around another corner; and, before the triumphant yell could reach him, saw that he was in a cul-de-sac. He had barely time to back up against the wall at the end of the alley before the crowd of foreigners filled the mouth of it.

A charitable moonbeam saved his life. By its light, the men with the daggers saw that the squat and whiskered man held something that glittered in his hand. They stood and yelled at him.

So long as he was not running and out of breath, nothing could shake the equanimity of Captain Webster. Slowly and surely he levelled his revolver. To see its muzzle rise was oddly reminiscent of those war pictures which show a howitzer being trained on the foe.

"You come any nearer, you bunch of wops," he said calmly, "and I'll fill you all so full of lead you'd do for ballast. You—tall feller! Don't you throw that knife."

The tall man yelled at him. He did not throw the knife. Instead, he turned and yelled in a dismal key for the police. One by one, his companions stopped their chatter and joined their voices with his. At the combined cry, the neighborhood awoke. Lights flashed into being at the windows. Ragged additions to the executive gathering flew up from nowhere. At the moment the captain decided to take a chance on breaking through in the confusion, the police arrived.

Two officers pushed through the crowd and halted in front of the tall man.

"What's all this?" said one of them, waving the crowd back with his club.

The tall man's doleful voice wailed out above the answering babel.

"We Branch Number Four, Polak Cloak Suit Tie Maker Lodge," he wailed. "We are in session when messenger arrives from Lodge Fifteen, which is striking. We have envelope—most important—to go to Lodge Fifteen. Messenger gives us pass-word; we hand out envelope; he cannot give us word for receipt. We open door. He run. Not lodge man at all. We chase. There he stand, envelope in pocket. Oh, take away and give to us, please, at once. He steal it."

The captain had moved from his place at the wall; and, revolver still in hand, now walked up to the policemen.

"I wouldn't believe that feller, anyway, sergeant," said he calmly. "I don't know what excuse he's been offering for rushing out on me with a gang of armed murderers, but I don't think he—has—a —truthful—eye."

His own eye fixed the tall man with a baleful glare.

"You throat-cuttin' heathen!" he ejaculated.

"What's your side of the tale?" asked the sergeant. "I suppose he didn't chase you for nothing, did he? Him and his pals?"

Innocence beamed from the face of Webster.

"All I know," said he, "is that I was sitting by the wall yonder—where the other officer saw me—contemplating the heavens, in which, as master of the steampship Leviathan, I am interested, when suddenly this bunch comes rushing around the corner, stops near, and talks bloody murder to each other. Then, not wishing to be party to their plans, I arise with a cry, and they chase me—"

"Why did you run," said the sergeant, "if you had no reason to?"

"Would you want to be cut to ribbons?" asked Webster with interest. The policeman subsided.

"All the fellers had was shears," he said, pointing to the gleaming metal in the hands of the tall man. "They carry 'em for insignia at lodge meetings of the tie-trade."

"Well, anyway," said the captain, eyeing the shears and ignoring them, "they didn't chase me far. I backed up against this wall and asked what I was being chased for. 'Excuse me, sir,' I said to them—"

"Well," said the sergeant, "his complaint is that you stole an envelope."

"Envelope? Me? What envelope? Have I been chased this far for a condemned penny envelope? Why—"

The sergeant turned to the tall man.

"What was in that envelope?" he asked. Before the tall man could unloose his eager consonants, the captain took the floor in haste.

"Say," he cried, "I got to get back to my ship. I can't stand here talking all night. I understand that chap to say—" he skated rapidly over this thin ice—"that he didn't got a good look at the man who took his envelope. If he's willin' to take the risk of havin' you arrest me on the strength of what he saw, he can take it, and God help his lodge when I bring suit against it for wrongful arrest. Or, if you want, search me for his envelope in front of him. Here's my card—Webster—Leviathan, Brooklyn; and there's my proposition. Let him take his choice. I got something better to do than talk to wops all night."

The policeman took the card—it was engraved—and saw the mighty name Leviathan. It sounded like a Cunarder at least; and the sergeant was about due for relief.

"Say," he cried to the tall man, "if we frisk this gent right here, will that satisfy you? Right here before you? You don't mind, Captain?"

"It goes to my heart," said Webster, "but no."

The tall man consulted with the group; and the captain, watching them with an agonized unconcern, gathered from their manner that the identification was actually not very complete. Confronted with policemen and uncompromising law, the Polak Cloak Suit Tie Makers faltered.

"They say 'All right,'" the sergeant said, turning from the group at last, "provided you'll come back with them over the ground they said you ran. We'll go there first, if you don't mind, Cap'n."

They went to the pile of cement bags; members of the lodge snooped with a frenzied diligence in all the corners there and along the road where a package might have been thrown, but found nothing.

Then, under an arc-lamp, the two policemen—in whose breasts something about the whiskers of the captain seemed to kindle suspicion—gave him such a searching as would have brought to light even a pinhead of unauthorized property.

They searched him twice, down to his skin and his boots; and, when the tall man suggested places for a third search, the sergeant noticed that Webster still held his revolver in a steady grip.

"You let me hold this," he said. "It might scare the crowd."

He held it while the other finished the search.

Save for sixty-three cents and a locket —which, Webster explained with offensive candor, contained a lock of his poor dear dead aunt's hair, the pockets of Captain Webster were empty. Of envelope, or of the possible contents of one, there was not a trace.

"Satisfied?" asked the sergeant, turning to the lodge members.

They were not, but the sergeant was tired. In his reasoning mind, he acquitted the captain entirely. Whiskers and rather too innocent mild blue eyes were not, he told himself, admissible as evidence.

"Well, you ought to be," he told the crowd sourly; and to the captain said, "You can go, sir; not our mistake."

He handed over the big revolver.

"Some cannon!" he remarked. "I bet you got a well-behaved crew."

"Oh, they're good lads," said the captain, "they wouldn't give *me* trouble; I ain't so young as I was, and it wouldn't be fair. Good-bye. Take the Eiffel Tower there home to cool off. If you want to know what I think of him and his envelopes—bein' a rheumatic man—"

He told them to such effect that even the sergeant smiled.

Sven Kill was still heavily asleep when his superior officer clattered light-heartedly into the cabin. The yelling of his name in tones of raucous quality and the utmost delight, only made him stir and say, "Uh!"

The captain sat down on the opposite side of the table, and shook him, until he awoke. Rubbing his eyes dazedly, he saw the captain draw the big revolver and tap with it on the table just as he had done at their previous interview.

The tapping continued and, as the astounded mate watched, he saw a roll of gold-colored paper emerge from the muzzle of the gun.

"In the barrel of that gun," said the captain, "is two thousand dollars in five-hundred-dollar bills. I'll tell you all about it in a minute. Where'd you have been if you'd had to hide 'em in your two-inch barrel popgun? Now which is the better length?"

Before the mate could answer, a new thought struck the captain.

He bawled with glee, and nearly rolled off his chair.

"My gar!" he cried. "They didn't know their own money when it was pointed at 'em!"

Clothing manufacturers say the public is recovering "from a spending drunk." The clothing people ought to know.—*Bridgeport Telegram.*

OVER THE GREAT DIVIDE

By ARTHUR LEEDS

BEG your pardon, sir. You'll have t' excuse me fer wakin' yuh; but are you—a medical man?"

The voice of the speaker was at once hesitating, apologetic, anxious, and eagerly inquiring.

The man addressed, roused from a sound sleep, not realizing what had been said to him, but with an instantaneous recollection of how he had once been robbed of his pocketbook while sleeping on a train, instinctively slipped his hand under his pillow and clutched the Colt automatic lying there. Then he raised himself on his elbow and looked toward the parted curtains of the berth.

"Eh? What? What's the matter?" he jerked out, in a voice still thick with slumber.

"I was askin', sir," the half-frightened voice replied, "if you was a medical man."

"Oh!" And then: "Yes, I am a physician, if that's what you mean. What do you want?"

"I just guessed you was a medical man o' some kind when I seen you readin' that book about 'Abominable Surgery' before the porter made up your berth last night. It's a shame t' disturb yuh, doctor, but Molly—my wife, I mean—is very sick. It came on her sudden and unexpected—really," half-apologetically, "an' she's pretty bad right now. I'm afraid—"

"One moment," the physician interposed, "what came on suddenly? What is your wife's trouble?"

"That's it, doc—I mean, doctor—her trouble. Her great trouble." The voice was a strange mixture of eager anxiety and relief at the aptness of the doctor's question which had made the answering of that question so much the easier. "It came on like I said, sudden and unexpected. Of course, Molly an' me both had a sort o' idea *about* when t' expect—"

"But, good heavens, man, what made you dream of attempting a railroad journey with your wife in such an extremely critical condition? You say you had an idea. Only very important business—"

"Well, that's just it, doc—er, doctor. I—we gotta make Frisco by the twenty-second. That is, I gotta make it; an' I couldn't persuade Molly t' stay behind an' come on after—after—you un'erstand. You see, we been away from each other quite a bit since we was married. We been in the East together about a year, now; but before that I was away from her for—two—years. So now she says she ain't a-goin' t' leave me go away from her again. I didn' want her t' make this here trip with me; I could 'a' gone back an' got her after I'd finished—er, landed the job I'm after, couldn't see that proposition fer a minute. Natcherly, a man don't want t' leave his wife when she's—when she needs him by her; but this'll be a great job if we—if I can land it. With this comin' on, it looks like we gotta watch out for the future more'n ever."

"Quite so," the physician agreed. "Which berth are you occupying?"

"Lower six. There's a young lady has lower nine that came on at Pueblo. She was talkin' t' Molly fer a while las' night

while I was in the smoker. From the way Molly said she talked, I reckon she must be a nurse. She's with Molly now."

While Kiernan had been talking, the other man had left his berth, and he stood now attired in trousers and coat over his pajamas, with a pair of leather slippers on his feet.

"Just sit down there on the edge of my berth," he said. "You're nervous and excited. I'll have a look at your wife. Your name is—"

"Kiernan—Thomas Kiernan. An' you're—"

"Dr. Stephen Hodder. I'll go to her now; you remain here. Possibly it's not so serious as you think."

The physician moved quietly up the aisle of the car in the direction of lower six. The husband sat down on the edge of the berth as directed, his face between his hands, elbows propped on his knees.

"This is Mrs. Kiernan?" he heard the doctor inquire in a firm but gently soothing voice. Then, as the young woman who had been sitting inside the curtains on the edge of the berth where his wife lay, got up and stepped into the aisle: "I am Dr. Hodder. I have just been talking with your husband. He tells me—"

The physician took the place on the edge of the berth which the young woman had just vacated, and the curtains closing about him cut off the remainder of his speech from the listening man.

By this time, however, there were several listening men, and listening women, also. Kiernan realized that almost everyone in the sleeper was awake; and, certain that before long they would all be, he became painfully conscious of their eyes fastened upon him. It was not that he resented their staring at him; but it seemed that the danger threatening the white-faced little woman in lower six was intensified, or, at any rate, made real and certain, by the fact that so many others were looking on, aware that there was something wrong. As a matter of fact, he was horribly nervous and wrought up; but even to himself, he tried not to admit it.

"Damn them! I wish they'd quit it. I wish they was all doped! They get on a guy's nerves rubberin' that a-way. Just a bunch o' white faces with eyes a-starin' at yuh, and green velvet all 'round 'em."

The words gritted through his tightly-set teeth; it was not until he had stopped muttering that he realized he was speaking loud enough for some of those nearest him to hear what he was saying. The stout lady in the berth directly across from where he was sitting gave a little sniff of disgust and suddenly withdrew her head.

"Pardon me, ma'am," he hastened to apologize. "I'm kind o' broke up an' nervous. I—I didn' mean you."

Again he had spoken almost without knowing that he was doing so. Half ashamed, he drew back into the berth and closed the curtains in front of his face. In the dark, though, he seemed to see his wife, lying with widely staring eyes and twitching lips, clutching the edge of the sheet in her slim, white fingers. His hand reached out to switch on one of the little electric lights at each end of the berth; then he drew it back and stepped out into the aisle.

He made his way to where the young woman who had been with his wife stood talking with the Pullman porter.

"I beg pardon," he ventured, still with the apologetic and half-frightened tone in which he had first addressed the doctor. "You was with Molly—my wife—when I came outa the smoker last night; but you left her just as I come up. I thought she said you was a nurse."

"I am a nurse. I'm going through to Salt Lake City. We got into conversation while you were out, and I—it struck me—that is, I don't know what made me feel certain—that—that it would be sooner than she had expected. I could

see that she hadn't expected it would be *quite* so soon.

"Oh, God!" Kiernan jerked out, brokenly. "It is my fault fer ever allowin' her t' start on this trip with me. But she would go; she *would* stick t' me! Molly's the kinda woman that'd follah a fellah and stick with him clean through hell, if he had t' go! Oh! excuse *me!* I ain't quite meself t'night. That's I don't know how many times I've had t' excuse meself for sayin' things I hadn't oughta say."

"I understand," the nurse assured him; "naturally, you're nervous and excited at the thought of your wife's trouble. But then, even if it is to be now, there is no more than the ordinary amount of danger. She's a pretty strong-looking little woman."

"She is—all but her heart; that kinda worries me at times. An' then, she's only a kid, 's far as age goes. We ain't been married quite three years, an' she wasn't hardly seventeen then. Do yuh think I could speak t' the doctor?"

"Why, yes, I should think so. I dare say that by this time—"

She was interrupted by the doctor himself stepping quickly but softly up the aisle and laying his hand upon her arm.

"Excuse me, Miss—I don't know your name—"

"Arnold," she said.

"Ah, yes Miss Arnold. I am Doctor Hodder, of Denver. I understand that you are a nurse?"

She replied in the affirmative, and the doctor looked at Kiernan.

"Will you go to your wife for a moment? She wishes to speak with you. Then, as soon as she asks you to, come back to me, here. Remember, come back to me when she says to—if you want to prevent her from being very sick."

Kiernan glanced at the physician with an expression of mingled nervous stupidity and dull resentfulness at the man's way of addressing him. He did not quite understand. Then, quietly, he turned and approached lower six berth.

"Was you wantin' me, Molly?" he half whispered. "What did th' doctor say?"

It was dark in the berth. The woman had asked the doctor to turn off the lights so that her husband might not notice her greater pallor and the twitching of her face and hands. She did not reply immediately; she seemed to be pondering what she wanted to say. The man reached out in the darkness and found one of her hands. It was covered by a cold sweat. He bent over and laid his cheek against hers; a long wisp of hair clung to it damply.

"Why, kid," he said, thickly, "yer face is all wet. Are yuh too hot?"

"No—no, I'm rather cold. Oh, but I don't need anything more over me, really! Listen, Tom, please—bend down close to me. The doctor says he thinks it will be now—soon. He wants to stay with me for a while, anyway, and he doesn't want anyone else to talk with me. He says he thinks that maybe I've been worried by something, and that the worrying has—has affected me in this way. I *have* been worrying, Tom, but I didn't tell *him* so. You know what I mean, dear. You mean so well, Tom. You love me—I know that. You want—" She stopped, and for several seconds she gripped the sheet tightly with her right hand, clinging tightly to his hand with her left. The pain racked her; but she bit her lip and allowed no sound to come from between her set teeth. He thought she had paused in order to think what to say to him; and he attributed the tight clutch of her hand to nervousness.

"You want to make me comfortable," she continued. "You want to give me plenty to eat and wear—and the baby, too, when it comes. You do mean so well, Tom, dear; but think how the money has been made—in the past. Think how we're both suffered in the

three short years since we were married. Think how happily we might have lived together in those two years that you were—away from me."

"Quit it, Molly," he whispered, huskily. "Don't talk about that now. That's all past, kid—all forgotten!"

"But what's ahead, Tom? Wait! Don't, dear; don't lie to me! You're going to—I can feel it. And it's not because you don't love me; its because you *do*. Ah, Tom, a woman understands. And then, *I know*. I've read the letter from Hamlin!"

The man started as if he had been struck in the face with a whip.

"Molly! Fer God's sake! Where! When?"

"In Denver, the day we stopped over. Oh, it doesn't matter just how I got to know. But, Tom, think—please! Hamlin says he'll land you on Easy Street for the rest of your life, if you'll only join him in Frisco by the twenty-second. Are you quite sure, dear, that he won't land you somewhere else? Are you certain—" the woman's voice was slow, impressive, pleading—"that he won't separate us again—part us for a longer time than he did before? You know, Tom, Hamlin always looks out for himself first; and you're easily lead, because you think it will give you the chance to make me comfortable and happy. I can be comfortable without that kind of money, Tom; and I'm happy just as long as you're with me—and safe. But if they ever take you away from me again—"

She gave a little moan of pain, and he felt her grasp his hand tightly in both of hers.

"Wait! It's all right!" she assured him, though her words came jerkingly and with apparent effort. "Only now, dear, I want you to go back to the doctor, as he said. Do, please; do just what the doctor tells you to do."

He gave her his promise, though he did not quite understand what she meant. He understood, however, what she had meant when she spoke of being separated from him again. Her pleading words seemed to be burning into his brain; there was a strange, dull, aching sensation in his heart that he had never known before.

"Ah, yes, there you are! I was just going to call you. Now, Mr. Kiernan, Miss Arnold and I are going to look after you wife just as if she were in her home. You see, we're not *just* sure what to expect, though we feel that it's best to be ready." Following the wishes of the sick woman the doctor lied unblushingly. "So I want you to go back into the smoking-compartment of the car behind this one, and to remain there until I come to get you. You understand? Stay there until I come to you—it is your wife's wish. In the *next* car—not this one."

"But, doctor—"

"If I am to be of any service to your wife, you must not delay me. Please do as I say."

Kiernan regarded the physician with eyes that resembled those of a dumb animal, hesitant about doing its master's bidding. For a quarter of a minute he stood gazing into the calm, strong face; then he turned and walked unsteadily to the rear of the car, and so passed on into the one behind.

The train slowed down and presently stopped. From where he sat he could not see the name on the station; but a time-table showed him that at three twenty-eight they should be leaving the flag-station of Granite; they were evidently a few minutes late.

"If I am to be of any service to your wife, you must not delay me." Had the doctor meant that Molly's illness was only a sudden weakness, attendant upon her condition, which he must hasten to remedy? Or, had he meant—Kiernan felt his pulse quicken and his breath come hard—that this was to be the end of the long period of anxious expecta-

tion, the climax of his distressed uncertainty and of Molly's anticipation, that calm, patient waiting endured by every woman who stands, day by day, week after week, and month after month, between the Angel of Life and the Angel of Death, clasping the hand of each, looking in turn into the face of each, waiting, trusting, longing, but never knowing from which hand hers will be disengaged; never flinching, but never able to guess if the warm, friendly hand of the Angel of Life will soon draw her from the grasp of the other, and away into the great happiness that she feels will be hers when the little life sleeping under her heart shall sleep within her embrace, or whether the icy relentless hand of Death's dark messenger will tighten upon hers, leading her away from life, away from happiness, away, even, from the new life, to bring which into the world she must sacrifice her own.

It was that! Kiernan was sure of it now. He had been pretty certain that it must be that when Molly's half-repressed moaning had awakened him. But the words of the doctor, and the fact that he had allowed him to go to his wife and had himself stayed at a distance quietly talking with the nurse, had given him the impression that, after all, it could not be what he had at first thought. Still, come to think of it, it could not be—yet! For it to be now would mean that the result—that Molly—!

No! No! It could not be so bad as that! He had been a pretty bad lot, in a good many ways, he was willing to admit; but he felt sure that God would not punish him to that extent; he would not strike him through the innocent little woman who had always tried so hard to make him a better man. He quite expected to be punished, but not—that way. Not here, upon earth, and while he had life—and Molly.

But—*had* he Molly? Right now, at this moment, *had* he Molly? The doctor had sent him in here, a whole car behind the one in which she was lying. Why, so that he should be unable to hear—anything? Why else? *Had* he Molly? Was she still there, weak and standing on the edge—the very edge—of the great chasm, perhaps, but still there, holding out her hand to lead him away from the path of temptation and wrong-doing, patient, self-sacrificing, loving as she had ever been; or was it all over, and was he—alone?

"Why don't they come to me? Why don't they send for me?" he cried out in his agony of mind. "Why did they—why did she want me to stay away in here, away from her?"

"A low, nerve-shattering scream, seemingly close at hand, set the blood dancing in his temples, and he sprang to his feet. Then, as he realized that it had only been the grinding of the car wheels against a switch in the steel track, he sat down again, trembling like a frightened child.

Another station. It was fast growing light outside. Night was lifting her mantle from the slumbering mountains, and he could dimly make out the rugged outlines of the Mosquito Range. Beneath them, as he knew, Leadville still slept. Then this was Malta; he had been there in the car alone for over half an hour. And, in that half hour—Molly!

The train started up again, and mingled with the grinding of the wheels as it gained in speed, Kiernan seemed to hear his wife's words: "Think how happily we might have lived together in those two years that you were—away from me."

It was true! Two century-long years! Away from her, snatched from her by the hand of the law, hardly three months after she had become his wife! Little more than a hundred miles back on this same line was the town with the great State Penitentiary—his home for those two years that they had been apart. All

the wonderful, natural beauty of the Royal George with its granite and mica walls and the winding, foaming river, rendered more picturesque by the great, full, silver moon overhead, had been powerless to make him forget the two years spent in the living tomb at Cañon City.

But there were other prisons where he was going! Dozens of them were waiting to receive him along the Pacific coast—if he chose to risk entering them. Now, however, it was not the fear of the prisons that oppressed him. He felt himself filled with an overpowering longing to be with his wife again—close to her, where he could hear the beating of her heart in the stillness of the night, the sound of her voice in the day, and where he could know that, whatever the past might have held for which now there remained regret, there was still the future open to them in which to live, love and be happy.

There was a cold sweat on his brow now; why, why didn't they come to him? If the worst had happened, why didn't they let him know? If all were well, why didn't they come and relieve this terrible, overpowering anxiety?

Poor little Molly! "I *have* been worrying, Tom; but I didn't tell him so." Worrying because of him! Tortured night and day by the thought that he might be torn from her again—this time, for how long? If Hamlin's scheme failed, and they were caught, it would be fifteen years a piece, at least.

Fifteen years! If the baby lived, it would grow up without ever knowing that its father was alive—he felt sure that Molly would spare it the disgrace of knowing the truth; and he would never feel the touch of its little hands, or laugh as it crowed when he played with it upon his knee. He would be—a number again.

The train had just passed another small station; he guessed it must be Leadville Junction. Every station brought him nearer to his destination, nearer to San Francisco, Hamlin, and another crime. He sprang to his feet and brought his tightly-clenched fist down on the sill of the window.

"Hamlin can go to hell!" he almost shouted. "I'm through with him!"

"I beg your pardon!"

Kiernan swung round on his heel and faced the physician. He saw that the calm face was rather pale, with a strained, troubled look in the eyes. Kiernan felt that he must know the worst, or whatever the doctor had to report, at once.

"It was that, doctor? She's been through it all? Then—oh! Why don't yuh tell me? Please, tell me!"

"Gently! Gently, my friend! Now, then," laying his strong, gentle hand on Kiernan's shoulder, "you may go to your wife, but I caution you to be very quiet with her. Do not excite her; and, although she will be anxious to, don't talk to her too long at present. She must have complete rest. We'll cross the Great Divide presently, and by half past eight we'll be in Glenwood Springs. There she can be transferred to a hotel. It will be rather a delicate job moving her; but she'll be able to rest there and get the proper treatment and attention."

Kiernan breathed a deep sigh of relief. Then it was not yet—what he had feared. Molly was pretty sick—that much he felt sure of; but she was not going to have to suffer sooner than she had expected.

"We had rather a tough time of it for a while. Miss Arnold's a splendid little assistant," the doctor continued. "But your wife will be all right, now, so you can go straight in and tell her how thankful you are."

Even yet poor Kiernan failed to understand.

"How long do you think she'll have to rest there, doctor?" he asked anxiously.

The physician looked at him narrowly. Then, being as quick to see that Kiernan did not understand as the other was slow to do so, he answered, smiling:

"Well, of course—I should say for ten days, at least. Now, don't you think you'd better go to her at once?"

But Kiernan had started before the doctor had quite finished speaking. He paid no attention to the few passengers who were sitting in their berths watching him; he did not even see the heads thrust out between the green curtains that walled the aisle of the car. He went directly to lower six.

There was no light in the berth. That end of the car was still comparatively dark; the blinds in the other berths were pulled down.

"Molly!" he whispered.

"Yes, Tom, dear."

"Wait, Molly; I want t' see yuh. Gee, Molly, I was 'most afraid I'd never hear yuh call me again."

He reached across and gently raised the blind nearest to her head a few inches; the reflection of the newly-risen sun fell across the pillow.

"My God, kid, what did they do t' yuh? Yuh look jest awful!"

Her face had only a little more color in it than the pillow on which it lay. Her brown hair was matted about her temples; and the white brow was furrowed with tiny, hair-like lines. But in the face there was a look of contentment and absolute happiness such as he had never seen in that of any other woman before—not even in hers on the day when she had met him in Chicago after he got through being a number and went back to claim her again.

He laid his hand gently on her forehead and bent over to kiss her. Then he started back as if shot, striking his head heavily against the upper berth; for a tiny, tremulous wail came from just beneath his elbow.

"Molly! Kid! It's a—" His voice was vibrant with excitement and unspeakable wonder.

"Yes, Tom, dear. It's a baby—*he's* our baby!"

"Let's see it, kid. Aw, let's see—"

With a rush of air and the echo of grinding wheels the train entered the tunnel on the crest of Tennessee Pass. It was totally dark in the berth again; even the lights in the car did not penetrate the curtains at his back.

"You won't be able to join Hamlin, now, will you, Tom, dear? The doctor says I must have two weeks' rest in Glenwood Springs. You're not sorry, are you, Tom? Maybe you'll be able to meet him afterwards—"

"Hamlin be— Say! Fergit Hamlin, kid—please. Th' only date I got now is with you."

The woman gave a contented little sigh. "We're just crossing the Divide, ain't we, Tom?"

"Yes, kid," he answered.

"Hamlin started you on the wrong road back in Chicago. Then, in Denver, he saw you sentenced for two years for a crime that he really committed. All that was back there, dear, miles and miles behind us; and it happened, oh, a hundred years ago—didn't it, Tom?"

"Naw, kid; yer all wrong. All that never happened at all. We're just a couple o' them emigrants strikin' out fer a new home in th' West. When we get where we're goin'—t' Santa Barbara—Uncle Dave'll take care o' us, an' help me t' get a start in something worth while. He's well fixed, Uncle Dave is; an' he don't know nothin' about—them two years. We've crossed th' Divide, kid; I reckon we crossed it th' minute I seen what yuh got tucked up there."

The train had left the tunnel and was rushing on over the first lap of its race down the Pacific Slope. The man looked long and wistfully into the face of the baby then into that of his wife. He bent over, half afraid, and quietly kissed the tiny, red face of the child. Then he pressed a lingering kiss upon the lips of the woman.

"It's a pretty baby, ain't it, kid?" he whispered, smiling down at her.

And the woman smiled in return.

THE SACRIFICE

By FRED H. JAMES

AR and wide stretched the veldt. The Boer woman stood upon the threshold of her farmhouse, looking across the glowing plain toward the horizon, where the sun was setting blood-red. With her right hand she shaded her eyes from the red glare, her left, encircled her rifle. Her face remained hard and expressionless while she stood and watched. It seemed as if the woman were expecting something—death or relief.

For a brief moment, a childish, flaxen head appeared from behind her skirts; but she vehemently, silently, pushed it back. There were five such flaxen heads inside, the youngest still in the cradle. Four of them already knew what danger was. They were born in the wilderness, had grown up in the treck-wagon, and were surrounded by a relentless nature. They instinctively acted the part of young foxes, when they seek shelter. They knew that the strong fell upon the weak; the smart upon the stupid; above all, they knew the meaning of the word, "Zulu."

The Zulus were on the warpath. Umsiliguse had them beat the *tom-tom*. Amidst murder and rapine, his black hordes marched against the unprotected Boer outposts, the lonely farms of the advance treckers, those fearless death-defying pioneers of the wilderness, who preferred to brave the lion's jaws to the surrender of their freedom to unjust officials.

The Boer woman's farm was located at some distance from the other settlements. Willem Van Reenen, her husband, had selected it because it reminded him of the farm he had left for the sake of freedom. Twice already, she had repulsed Zulu attacks and she hated to revert to those events. Now, again, there were infallible signs that another attack was planned. The blacks had been restless, defiant, insubordinate. One morning, one of them had disappeared; during the following days, the others dropped off, one by one; even the Beshuana mulatto, who had been the most tractable one of all, disappeared during the night. Alarmed, Willem Van Reenen had mounted his horse and left to get assistance from the nearest Boer settlement.

With a loaded rifle, a cartridge belt and her four minor children, his wife had remained behind to watch. Near a peep-hole in the rear wall stood Jan, her eldest boy, a pistol in his bony little hand. He was eleven—lithe and sinewy, like a cat, and already could stand his man. Next came three girls: Jantje, eight; Mintje, six, and Maria, four years old. In the cradle lay Cornelius, the youngest, ten months old. The Boer woman was harsh with her brood, like so many other mother-beasts of the veldt. The instinct of preservation had taught her to grab and punish them harshly so that they might become quick and alert. Resoluteness and presence of mind were indispensable here. Who lacked them, had to perish. Only the youngest got his share of tenderness; being as yet, altogether dependent upon his mother. The tall woman stood erect, leaning upon her rifle. With one last spark, the sun went down. Yonder, near the Vulture-

Kopje, she imagined she saw a dark object slowly moving forward. She knitted her eyebrows and looked attentively. Yes, there it was, moving again. It was a human form—a man—but he was moving in a strange manner. Once he seemed to stand up, then he sank upon his knees again; suddenly he seemed effaced from the vast, glowing veldt. Above the spot where she had seen him last, three vultures were waiting.

With a rush, the thought struck her that it was Willem Van Reenen, her husband, who lay out there. The strong woman's brain was in a whirl, but amidst the many conflicting emotions that crossed each other with lightning-like rapidity, one thing stood out absolutely certain—a great misfortune had taken place, and it had befallen Willem.

An iron resolution suddenly came into her face, while she stood staring out upon the darkening veldt, and a strange calm overspread her tortured features. Without delay, she turned and called into the house: "Jantje!"

The child ran up to her.

"Shove the bolts and stay here behind the door, until you hear me call."

The child did not move, nor ask what its mother intended to do.

"Yes, mother," was all she said.

Thus the Boer woman left her brood in the lonely house, took a spade from the wall outside, and with it and her rifle, walked with long strides into the twilight.

It was a moonless evening. For that she felt thankful to God. Upon the heaven the stars began to appear. With the instinct of the dwellers of the wilderness, she found the spot without difficulty. In the vanishing light, phantom-like objects rose before her; her foot struck something soft—lifeless.

She knelt down and felt of the body. Slowly she turned it over, tore open the shirt to feel the heartbeat; it was still. When she withdrew her hands they were wet and sticky. With an old piece of flint she had in her pocket, she struck a light. She had to make sure at any cost. The tiny flame illuminated the pale face of the dead man. It was her Willem. She let the light wander over his bare chest. It was perforated by two deep assagai wounds. She knew the sharp edges of these wounds but too well; like thin, bloodless lips they looked. Now she knew the worst.

Without delay, she began to dig. The virgin soil rebelled against the spade. It squeaked and moaned each time her foot forced into it. A network of fine, tough roots permeated it, and each one rebelled against the disturber. The perspiration ran from her forehead in streams. Blood oozed from beneath her fingernails, but she dug on until she had made a fullsized grave, long enough to hold the body and deep enough to prevent the vultures from disinterring it.

The thought of the Zulu horde, resembling a pack of hungry wolves, ran through her mind, but she would not give way to fear. They must not attack her, not now—she had to finish her task first. Once the thought of God, the just God, to whom the Boers pray, came to her, but she gritted her teeth and dug on. Her hard hands, covered by new welts, now tenderly grabbed her beloved dead by the shoulders and dragged him into the resting place she had dug for him. Then she closed the staring eyes.

"Good-night, Willem, dear," she whispered. "You will have it good here—better than we others." Hastily she shovelled the earth back over the newly-made grave. When a small mound rose above it, she picked up her rifle, leaned upon it, murmured a prayer, turned, and with long, calm strides, walked back to the lonely farmhouse.

All around her were the nocturnal sound of the birds; the distant howl of a hyena; the frightened chirping of some small furred animal that had fallen a

prey to larger ones. Her sharp ears heard them all. But once, there came another sound, more penetrating, more nerve-racking than the dismal howl of the hyena—the dull, monotonous sound of the *tom-tom*. It was so far away, so low and indistinct, that she was not sure, until she put her ear to the ground.

The sound of the *tom-tom* came from the direction of the grave; the Zulus had been close upon the farmer's heels. She never stopped to ask how he had managed to escape despite his wounds; she knew what she had to do now, and did it instinctively.

She had to save her children and there was but one way, unless help came at the eleventh hour. This, she realized, was impossible, since her sharp ear had told her that the blacks were between the farm and the next settlement; hence assistance was cut off.

Jantje immediately pulled back the bolts when she heard her mother's voice.

"Jan!" the Boer woman called out. The boy, still holding the pistol in his hand, ran up to his mother. "Quick!" she said, "we must get away into the swamps. Is the baby sleeping?"

Jan nodded affirmatively. When she took the child from the cradle, he awoke and started to cry. She unbottoned her dress and gave him her breast, while she looked for something to wrap him in, for the night on the veldt was bitter cold.

The others had to help themselves. They stuffed bread into their pockets and drank up what milk was left. The mother simply said, "Come!"

Silently they went out. Jan, with his pistol, in advance, then Jantje, and Mintje, holding little Maria by the hand, and lastly, the Boer woman, with Cornelius and her rifle. Under cover of darkness, they wandered into the swamplands.

Time and again they stumbled or sank up to their knees in the marsh, but no word of complaint escaped the children's lips. Even little Maria knew that her life depended upon silence. The infant slept, satisfied.

At the edge of the dismal swamp, in which the stars were dimly reflected, they squatted down. It was the Boer woman's idea to let the children duck under when the greatest danger approached. Until then, until day dawned, they could remain at the edge.

The three little girls still held each other's hand, and after they had looked around in the darkness for a while, their eyes grew heavy, then closed altogether.

From time to time, a bullfrog plunged into the water, or the rustling of the reed told of a snake that was winding its way to the water.

"Mother!" whispered Jan, "where is father?"

"He won't come back, Jan," she replied hard.

The boy kept silent, only his grip upon the pistol tightened. Once Mintje started out of her sleep with a scream of fright. Instantly, two hands were clapped over the mouth of the sleeping child.

Soon after midnight the watchers heard a howl from many throats, resembling the howl of hungry beasts who had been cheated out of their expected prey. A shudder went through them, then all was still. Not long afterward, a column of flame shot heavenward, illuminating the dismal veldt near and far.

As the flame slowly sank, day dawned.

All except little Cornelius were awake long before. The bloodthirsty eagerness of the insects would not let them rest. Already the dull outlines of the distant mountains could be discerned.

"Dip under now!" ordered the Boer woman. The three little girls slipped into the slimy water like frogs. Up to their necks they stood in it. Jan followed, but not until he had placed his beloved pistol upon a dry spot, within easy reach of his hand.

The mother was last. She, too, dipped into the dark water up to her chin. Only the bundle she held high. She knew she would have to dip it under, too—if it came to the worst—but not yet.

So they stood, surrounded by clouds of mosquitoes that settled down upon them.

About this time, the infant started to wail. Perhaps the coolness of the water penetrated his coverlets; perhaps he was hungry again. To them, his tiny voice seemed to fill the entire surroundings. "Still, brother, still!" whispered the little ones, looking upon the bundle with fear-glazed eyes.

The Boer woman stuck one finger into the infant's mouth. It sucked contentedly and was still. Once there came a sound of steps in the bushes, and their heads sank deeper into the dark water, as deep as they could, without losing their breath, but it was only a wild beast that had lost its way. Then the sun rose in the east at the edge of the veldt.

At that moment, the woman's gaze fell upon a lone rock that stood out in bold relief against the now bright horizon. There was something moving upon it that attracted her attention. Three dark forms, armed with shield and assagai, had climbed upon it and were watching the surrounding veldt.

With the calm of desperation, the Boer woman looked at them, but the others, too, had espied them. Their heads now lay upon the dark water like so many water-fruits; their bright eyes hung upon the same spot; the bundle containing the infant, held up by the mother's hands, alone rose above the surface of the water. It was the only thing that was bound to betray them.

With a groan, the Boer woman whispered: "Father in Heaven!" as she slowly dipped her youngest into the dark water until it reached the infant's chin.

The Zulus had not discovered them. They climbed down from the rock and ran off in different directions. It was clear that they were still searching for the inmates of the farmhouse, for they looked everywhere; ran their spears through every bush and peered behind every stone. It was evident, however, that the flat plain could not easily conceal a human being, or they would have looked more carefully.

Two of the Zulus had turned and were going farther away, still looking for the fugitives. The third approached the edge of the swamp.

At that moment, the infant started to cry. It was the shrill, penetrating cry of the nursling, innocent like that of a lamb that cries for its mother, and equally inappeasable.

The Boer woman had nerves of steel, but the infant's cries cut them as with a dull saw. "My youngest!" she said to herself. Her little Cornelius was handing the other four to the executioner. They turned to her with the fear of death upon their blanched faces.

The Zulu had approached within hearing distance—he was bound to discover them. He stood still and raised his chin, like a deer scenting the air.

With a low moan, the Boer woman let her hands sink deeper and still deeper, until the dark water rose softly, relentlessly, and covered the small whimpering mouth. A short gurgling—a few small hubbles from the great silence below—and all was still.

Shots rang out. The Zulus ran hither and thither, then turned and fled toward the mountains. A troop of mounted Boers had arrived to protect the farm. The attack of the Zulus had cost many victims, but it had been repulsed once more.

The Boer woman sat in front of her burned home, rocking her dead child upon her knees, murmuring low, broken words of endearment. The other children stood helplessly around her. She did not notice them. Almost forcibly, the soldiers drew her away from the ruins.

ATTAR OF ROSES

By THOMAS FAY WALSH

LIKE the roof of Hades, the Plaza radiated heat long after the sun had set. If it were any cooler than the hotel, it was imperceptible; but, at least, there were fellow heat-sufferers, and man can suffer more patiently in company. Chairs scraped, glasses clinked, voices rose and fell. I wandered from café to café, seeking a table or a vacant seat. The outside tables were crowded; to go inside was unthinkable and useless, as every chair was doing duty. Finally, I reached the last, and, because it was near the water's edge and a faint zephyr stirred the air, the crowd seemed thickest.

"If the senor will but wait a minute, a chair will soon be vacant," assured the proprietor.

But as that was the fourth time I had heard that in twenty minutes, I turned away disgusted, and bumped into a white-clad figure, carrying a portable table and a camp-stool. Though our impact was slight, he dropped his burden and would have fallen but for my grasp on his arm. It was like grasping the arm of a skeleton, so thin and bone-like did it feel. His face was ghastly white; but his eyes, buried in heavy shadows, were feverishly bright. He was gasping like a winded runner. In fact, I thought he was going to collapse, but in a few minutes he recovered somewhat. We set up his little table and seated him.

"I'm all in," he said; "slightest shock, no wind." He motioned to the waiter, who had hurried up. "Bring my friend a chair, box, anything to sit on."

He would not listen to my profuse apologies, but begged me to stay.

"Awful lonesome," he pleaded. "Join me," and with a pallid smile, he finished: "never refuse the dead."

So I stayed. He was a bottomless reservoir for drink. He mixed the drinks recklessly; and, the more he drank, the less he coughed, the better he talked. He was an American all over, and evidently a thoroughbred. He knew some polo men I knew, and that, with our libations to Bacchus, cemented our friendship; so we talked of sport, of hunting, the surprising turn the great polo match had taken, of Broadway, women, and immortality. We tore the universe to shreds and rebuilt it to our liking; and, truly, if we could remember how we reconstructed it, it must have been a noble edifice, indeed.

Finally, we fell silent, gazing out into the sea—by that time I had captured a chair to replace my box, as, verily, I needed its back to lean against—with its unfathomable darkness and the wondrous star-spread dome overhead, and he talked of space and vast distances, and that old puzzling question man has racked his feeble brain about, "What lies beyond?"

"Only a little while," he said. "I know all, and I'm not afraid, although sometimes, when I lay sleepless listening to a baby crying, I wish I were that child, or that gay young fellow I saw kissing his girl in the park, and, sometimes, I even think I could endure life-imprisonment if I could only live. But it cannot be, and I must not murmur; for ever I love gameness, above all things, whether in man or horse or dog, and when my

little balance at life's bank is gone and the collector approaches, I must meet him with a smile."

So we drank some more, and as we shook hands for the twentieth time, I felt so sorry for him I wept.

Finding that he roomed at my hotel, I endeavored to lug him home, but we must have zig-zagged pretty erratically, for we found ourselves, finally, at the back door, where a chef kindly steered us to the higher regions. I saw his man get him to bed, and, of course, we had to have a last drink.

Like the straw on the camel's back, that drink broke down the last barrier between us. It loosened his tongue like a broken flood-gate, and he told me the most amazingly absurd, yet blood-stirring tale of persecution, of a vague, subtle life-destroying creature who had wrecked his life and health, and left him as he was. He waxed eloquent on the fitting vengeance he had planned, which was the lodestone that had brought him to this enervating climate, and he said he dared not risk going home for fear he would not survive the journey, his revenge unfulfilled. He told how he had so cunningly schemed that this direful monster was coming to him, and how he would need a faithful friend; and I swore to stand by him and help, anyhow.

I was in no condition to remember the ravings of a disordered brain, so, finally, I dragged myself off, to fall into bed, clothes and all, as, by that time, to undress myself was an impossible feat, and I had no man.

We became great friends. He was witty, fond of books, and a veritable encyclopedia on sport. Although we talked of many things, he never referred to that nightmarish story again. We never got quite so drunk again; perhaps that may account for it.

He was visibly failing in that burning clime. I never could quite understand why he was there. He seemed to have plenty of money and spent freely; but he had one peculiarity I heartily disliked, and that was the indiscriminate use of perfume. His rooms and person reeked of attar of roses. I spoke to him jokingly about it once, and he replied shortly, his voice as sharp as a chisel, that he disliked it as much as I did, but his tone forbade further questioning.

He brightened visibly when he received news that his uncle, in response to his urgent message, was coming to see him, and, from the manner in which he awaited his arrival, I guessed the bond between them to be a very strong one. It was, but not in the manner I thought. His uncle was his sole heir, he told me once, and that he had no control over the disposition of the estate left in trust to him; but as the days passed and steamer after steamer came in, he grew more impatient. He would pace his rooms or the veranda like a wild animal, until weakness compelled him to sit down, or he brought on a choking fit of coughing. But, one day, a wireless message came, and, as I was going to his rooms, I took it from the boy. It was from his uncle, and the boat was due that afternoon.

I rapped on the door, which was slightly ajar. There was no answer, so I walked in. He was standing near the window, his back turned. The air was permeated with the most powerful odor of roses I ever smelled. He was working eagerly over a large glass case, and he held a small glass vial, from which he was dropping some liquid, carefully. So absorbed in his task was he that I was at his elbow before he sensed my presence. With wonderful rapidity for an invalid, he turned and struck at me, missed—his momentum carrying him to the floor.

Never had I seen such a rage distorted face as he turned toward me. His eyes literally blazed, a hectic flush suffused his face. As he recognized me, his features relaxed, the intensity of the eyes dulled, and he smiled wanly. I got him into a chair and mixed him a stiff drink.

"My God," he whispered hoarsely, "how you startled me! Why didn't you speak?"

"I made noise enough coming in," I answered and gave him the wireless.

It acted on him like the elixir of life. He was like a new man and I wondered at the affection he must have for his uncle. Then I glanced toward the glass box, and what I saw brought me to my feet, exclaiming. Inside its thick walls was a monstrous malignant spider, larger than a tarantula, more like an octopus. It was venomously attacking meat, and from the vial beside the case, lying where he had dropped it so suddenly, I judged he had been pouring rose perfume on the food. It was certainly a hideous-looking animal. Its cage was heavily wired on top, and when George, noticing my astonishment, but vouchsafing no explanation, carried it to a closet, I noticed he wore heavy gauntlets. He begged me to forget his sudden outbreak and made me promise not to mention about his strange pet to anyone.

"It's a kind of hobby," he said, "and if they knew I had it here, they might make me destroy it, although it is not dangerous."

I very much doubted his last statement, but was glad to go. The awful perfume was nauseating.

"There is something very wrong somewhere; of that, I am sure," I thought.

The uncle arrived. I was not at the boat, but their meeting must have been pathetic. In spite of his weak condition, George insisted on going. His man went with him. George was a veritable bundle of nerves, just living by force of will. I met them at dinner that evening. Warner was a big, ordinary-looking man, nothing striking except his lips. They were fearfully thin; when shut, his mouth looked like a knife-edge. George ate little; he seemed content to hear his uncle talk and feast his eyes on him. I could not make out Warner's attitude toward his nephew. He did not drink; he seemed wary, always watching. Now and then, he looked at George in a peculiar manner. I supposed he was searching for the motive that brought him to such an infernal place in the height of summer and the importunate cablegram that had dragged him from the cool breezes of the North. Still, he was very affable and jolly and solicitous about his nephew.

It was the first night in weeks that George went to bed really sober. We sat with him a while, and he seemed actually happy.

Warner's rooms were on the other side of the hotel, facing the water. After we bade George good-night, I walked part way with him, and he indulged in some fancy expletives about the heat and food, and his tiresome journey, and the whims of invalids in general, and of that awful perfume.

"By Heavens, how it sickens me!" he said.

I didn't blame him. A little would be tolerable, but it was overwhelming, the way George used it. I would have given anything to know his real feelings toward the boy. He was a lawyer by profession and would be a very rich man when his nephew died, judging from what George had told me. Well, I was leaving that detestable place the next week, yet I hated to think of leaving that poor boy so gamely smiling in the dread reaper's face. Still his uncle was there and I felt he would be content.

The next day they were together all day. I did not see much of them until night. Then a curious thing happened. They were standing in the lobby, and, whatever he said, George laughed loudly. Warner seemed afraid to touch George or get close to him. Then, he took him by the arm; they were evidently going to bed. At least George was; it was after eleven.

At times, when he laughed, it caused coughing, and he had a violent coughing spell. I hastened forward and we helped

him to a chair; Warner bent over him anxiously. George took a medicine-vial from his pocket and emptied it into his mouth. Scarcely had he done so when a paroxysm of coughing attacked him, and right into his uncle's face he blew the contents of the vial. It must have been that heavy rose oil, from the smell.

Warner sprang back, his face livid, murderously deformed. For an instant I thought he would bury his massive fist in his nephew's body, but he recovered himself, and by the time George was through coughing, he was the same quiet, solicitous friend. But in that instant I had seen the real man.

George was heartbroken about it, but Warner, vigorously mopping his face, assured him it was nothing. I offered to take George to his rooms, so his uncle could change his clothes and bathe. He certainly was odoriferous, and from what I know of perfumes, he was liable to be so for some days to come.

I met Jamison, the valet, carrying a tray as I left the dining-room the next day. George, he said, was very bad. The doctor was then with him. It seemed that, some time during the night, he got up, either delirious or asleep, and wandered about the hotel corridors until he was in a state of complete exhaustion. The night clerk had found him and had carried him to his apartments.

"I'll be glad to get home, sir," Jamison complained. "What with heat and perfume, and that awful pet spider, I'm nearly crazy; but he loves the thing, sir. That's what he came down to this ungodly hole for. Bought it from a native way up the country before we came here, and he saw dozens of them before he took this one. He perfumes everything it eats. No matter where he hides the food, as long as he puts rose on it, the creature finds it. He has it running up the doors and eating on the transom-sill, from one room into another, on the closet-shelves, and lately, sir, he's been feeding it on the bed. He says it is not poisonous, but he always handles it with gloves."

I certainly agreed with poor Jamison on his views on perfume and spiders. A few minutes later he called me. George was seated, dressed in his usual white, but there was a big change. Death was in his eyes. He coughed incessantly. He wanted to go to his uncle. I offered to send a boy or go myself, but he would not hear of it. He was in a highly nervous condition and our refusal only accentuated it. So, Jamison and I on each side, we started.

I wondered if Warner still smelled of perfume, and what he would say to our humoring the sick boy's every notion. As it was almost nine o'clock, he would be up and dressed. We knocked and called repeatedly, but there was no answer; so I sent Jamison to the dining-room, lobby, and office, but without result. No one had seen him that morning.

Finally, the manager came, and his pass-key opened the door. Warner lay on the floor, a little way from the bed, and there we stood transfixed—the manager, poor George, the valet, and I—and gazed down on that distorted face, swollen almost beyond recognition.

As we stood there, suddenly George collapsed, sinking to his knees, but his eyes never left the horrible face. Lord, what a sight for a dying man to see! We stretched him out gently, almost beside his uncle, and Jamison hurried for the doctor.

Involuntarily, my eyes turned back to the strong man, who had died so hard. The little veins in his cheek were swollen and distended; they looked like a spider's web.

Trembling like a palsied man, I staggered to my feet, one burning thought consuming me, and hurried to George's room, which we had left only a few minues before. I rushed to the closet, tore open the door, and looked. The tarantula's cage was empty.

A CIGARETTE—THAT'S ALL

By HELENA GRACE EVANS

SCAPING the vigilance of door keeper and elevator boy, and not deterred by the many signs inimical to agents, he had reached the top story.

Jim, the office boy, answering his knock, looked him over carefully. Tall and imposing, clad in well cut black, he had the air of a gentleman. Surely that satchel contained something to be used in evidence.

Jim opened the door of an inner office.

"Mr. Barrett, some one to see you."

Jasper Barrett, of the firm of Barrett & Bates, attorneys-at-law, rose to greet a client. Then he espied the satchel.

"You have been misdirected, we allow no solicitors in this building."

"Pardon me, you will be interested in this." He opened the satchel.

Mr. Barrett was annoyed.

"I have no desire to see your wares. Jim, show this gentleman out."

Meantime the agent seated himself. He was apparently perfectly at ease, and very graciously waved Mr. Barrett to a chair.

Jasper Barrett gasped and sat down.

He looked curiously at this strange man.

He was very dark-skinned with the golden-yellow darkness of the East Indian. His hands and feet were small, aristocratic; his manner charming.

"Evidently a high caste Hindoo," thought Barrett, who was always exceedingly clever at detecting nationality.

The agent took from his satchel a small package. This he unwrapped, disclosing a pair of spectacles.

Jasper Barrett arose, indignant.

"You have taken up quite enough of my time. My eyesight is excellent, I have no need of glasses."

"But you will really want these. They are not at all like ordinary glasses," and before Jasper could protest, he had placed a pair on his nose.

The intervening wall seemed to melt away. In its place appeared the table, the bookcases, all the furniture of the outer office, and Jim standing by the window.

The boy raised his head and seemed to listen for a moment. Then very stealthily he moved over to the table, opened a drawer and took out a cigar. This he put in his pocket, and once more took up his position by the window.

"The little scamp! I'll take a pair just for the satisfaction of catching him. What is the price?"

"One hundred dollars."

"Well of all the cheek! A hundred dollars for a pair of spectacles! Why—"

"You do not wish for them then?" The Hindoo's voice was as soft and velvety as the purring of a kitten.

Jasper looked into the man's eyes. They were handsome eyes, rather metallic in their clear unflinching gaze. Jasper Barrett looked into them for only a moment, then seated himself at his desk.

"What name do I put on this check?"

"I prefer currency," said the Hindoo.

So Jasper went to his safe, opened it, took out the money and handed it to the man.

The Hindoo thanked him, and taking his little satchel, opened the door and went quietly out.

"Now for some fun." Jasper put on the spectacles and turned towards the stenographer's room.

Miss Steele had been in the firm's employ several years. She was a fine looking girl, possessing a good figure and a most beautiful complexion. She was working at the typewriter. Soon she finished and rising, got her hat and put it on before the mirror. Then she opened her hand bag and took out a tiny little box.

Dipping her finger in this, she rubbed it on her face. The roses bloomed afresh in her pretty cheeks.

Jasper chuckled to himself. Certainly these spectacles were great fun.

Beyond the stenographer's room was the private office of his partner, William Bates. As he turned the glasses in that direction, he wondered what particular weakness of Bill's would be disclosed. He would hardly be guilty of stealing cigars or rouging, but there must be something.

As the haze settled and the different objects in the room became clearly defined he saw Bill seated at his desk. Near him was a man whom he immediately recognized as the foreman of the jury that was trying one of their cases before the civil court.

Barrett & Bates had been very successful with law suits. They hoped to win this one, for it involved many thousands of dollars, and a big contingent fee.

It was impossible to surmise what the two men were discussing, for unfortunately the long-distance glasses did not reproduce sounds. The conversation lasted some minutes. The foreman, a big, burly Irishman, much given to gesticulation, seemed to become quite excited.

Barrett watched the two men some minutes, and as nothing of interest happened, he was about to turn his glasses elsewhere, when a movement of his partner's arrested him. He saw him go over to his safe, open it, and take from an inner drawer a bundle of greenbacks. These he handed to the juryman. The man counted them and put them in his pocket.

Perfectly did Jasper Barrett understand the little pantomime. And this his friend, whom of all men he had considered most honorable! Had any one related the circumstance to him he would have spurned it as the basest slander. As it was he could not doubt the evidence of his own senses.

Removing the glasses he sat there a long time, going over the little scene in his mind. He tried to frame excuses. He realized that he had lost something that could not be replaced.

So disturbed was he, so disgusted with mankind in general, that he was half tempted to throw the glasses out of the window.

But before he did that, it might be just as well to look toward that one spot on earth where he could find truth and honor.

Toward his home, then, he turned the glasses.

She was sitting by the library fire. Beside her was her cousin, Jack Dearing. They were reading, their young heads bent close together over the open book.

Suddenly Helen started, laid her finger on her lips, and seemed to listen.

Jack got up, and standing by the mantel, took out a long Turkish cigarette, lighted it, puffed at it for a moment, then threw it on the anthracite grate. The fire was low, and it did not ignite, but lay there on top of the black coals. He looked at his watch, said something to Helen, and she came and stood beside him.

He put his arms around her, lifted her face to his, and kissed her on the lips.

Jasper Barrett, jumping up, dashed the glassed from his eyes. Was there

no honor left in the world? Was there no one in whom he could ever place confidence again?

He would go home at once and confront the guilty pair. But first it might be well to take another look at them.

He picked up the glasses, put them on, and looked toward his home. He could see nothing but the desk, the bookcases, and walls of his office. He took off the glasses, found they were not broken, wiped them, put them on again. Nothing, absolutely nothing beyond the office walls!

He sat down and tried to think it over. His brain was in a whirl. He was not a drinking man. What could have come over him?

Then suddenly the truth flashed upon him.

That Hindoo had hypnotized him!

There could be no doubt of it. He had heard of their wonderful powers, how they hypnotized whole audiences into seeing things that had never existed.

Well, it was a good joke on himself, if rather an expensive one. He must go right home and tell Helen. Fortunately she possessed a sense of humor.

Living in the suburbs, it took him some time to reach home.

Helen was waiting for him. She helped him off with his overcoat, and together they went into the library.

When they were seated on the settle by the fire, her fair head resting on his shoulder, he related his strange experience, that is, he did so in part. He told her about Jim and Miss Steele, and dear old Bill; and how she laughed at it all.

"By the way, was Jack over to-day?"

"No, I have not seem him." Rising, she picked up the poker and began to stir the fire.

"It has turned cold," she said.

The fire was very low. Above, the coals were black and needed considerable stirring. Some little object that had lain on top, she pushed down among the red coals. It caught fire and blazed merrily up the chimney. It was nothing of value, and seems hardly worthy of mention. It was only a long Turkish cigarette.

Protest From Sir Oliver Expected.

John Stapleton tells us that he has been in Hartford lately. Over the gateway into a cemetery he saw the following legend: A One-Way Drive.—*Christopher Morley.*

MEOWS FROM THE MOVIES

By ALICE GLENISTER

Did you know that Elaine Hammerstein, Selznick star, has been called the "Debutante of Pictures" because she is just the type of girl who comes out at a big tea, rides and plays through a couple of seasons and then makes a brilliant marriage?

Handsome Eugene O'Brien, who has always made his pictures in Eastern studios, will make his next Selznick picture, "The Figurehead," in California. We'll say Eugene is no "figurehead," but a most popular matinee idol. Yes?

As soon as she has finished "'Op o' My Thumb," Mary Pickford will make a trip all around the world lot. She will be the guest of Lord Northcliffe, be presented to the King and Queen of England, 'n everything. Wouldn't wonder if Mary would marry a Duke or Count or something. Who knows?

Constance Talmadge admitted to us that she is a "regular comedienne" and couldn't pull off the Thedabara stuff to save her life: "I enjoy making people laugh and cannot cry real tears even for the screen."

Norma Talmadge came home so entranced with the climate of Cuba that she is endeavoring to persuade her husband, Joseph M. Schenck, to build a permanent studio there for her. Wouldn't wonder if he did; Norma gets her way in almost everything. We know that she has won her way into our hearts for keeps.

Her next picture, recently purchased, will be "Yes or No," from the well known play by Charles Goodrich.

Marion Davies, the beautiful young star of "April Folly," Cosmopolitan production, is a highly practical young lady. When fourteen, she could cut and make her own clothes (and could now, if she had the time). Would you believe that this radiantly beautiful girl once had the ambition to be modiste for dressy old dowagers? Fact, though.

We cannot refrain from expressing our approval of the way she dresses her part as a newspaper woman in "April Folly." Her dainty blouses and plain suits show her discrimination in dress. Most stars would wear impossible and inappropriate apparel which, although attractive in films, would reveal bad taste in dressing the part.

While Pearl White was in Fort Henry, N. Y., where some scenes for her Fox picture, "The Tiger's Cub," were being taken, she displayed her skill as a snowshoe expert, winning a race from a native, who had been "born and brought up" on them. Said native thought Miss White a novice. Miss White is not a novice at anything.

"If you want a thing done well, do it yourself," is an adopted motto of Tom Mix, Fox star, and one that he claims has carried him far on the road to success. His photoplay, "The Daredevil," was written and directed by himself—and has proved him to be a most skillful director and cameraman.

Bert Williams, so we are told, is a new screen possibility, and, if he accepts the offer of a well-known corporation, will be presented in stories written around his personality and peculiar talents. We'll say, he will add color to the screen.

Olive Thomas, Selznick star, plays the part of a sixteen-year old flapper in "Dangerous Paradise." Olive is not only an actress, a beauty, and scenario writer, but excels as an interior decorator. Her apartment in New York is furnished and fitted entirely from designs executed by herself. We have liked Olive ever since her old Triangle days.

We remarked to Alice Brady, Realart star, on the fact that she wears her marvel-

ous and fabulous string of pearls so constantly. "Yes," she replied, "I believe that their beauty and duration is increased if constantly worn—I even sleep with them." So would we, and with a gun in our grasp.

William S. Hart, "two-gun man," now has an opportunity to put into real life the effect of a pair of guns as a means of making his opponent do just about as he wishes. He claims that Thomas Ince owes him $100,832 and interest. Go to it, Bill, the gang's with you.

We were informed recently at the Fox studios that the stories of Richard Harding Davis had been purchased for the screen. This is a most pleasing announcement, for we are thus assured of at least sixty-seven good stories, written by a man who knew how to visualize his characters through text.

Foremost among the Davis classics to be produced by William Fox are "Gallegher," a newspaper story; "Real Soldiers of Fortune," the Van Bibber stories, and "The Lion and the Unicorn." Can't you visualize William Farnum starring in some of these?

Mary Miles Minter tells us that she has purchased a new Locomobile limousine, which is "a dressing room on wheels," and has been especially fitted to allow change of costume or make-up on location. We wish, however, her producers would provide a change in their type of vehicles for this star—stories that will at least compare in a small degree with her talents and beauty.

Rubye de Remer, whom you have no doubt seen, playing opposite Eugene O'Brien in his "Fool and His Money," is declared to be the most beautiful blonde since Venus. Not having a speaking acquaintance with Venus, we can only judge by her photos, which gives us the impression that Miss Rubye has her "backed off the boards."

Comes the announcement that D. W. Griffith threw away $175,000 for "Way Down East." Perhaps the fans will like it—perhaps they won't, but why must this wizard of the screen play his money on these melodramas? It helps some to know that Burr McIntosh, the original Squire Bartlett, is in the cast. Lillian Gish has been abused so much in "reel" life, that the part of Anna Moore will not need much rehearsing.

You all know Priscilla Dean? One will scarcely recognize her in "The Virgin of Stanboul" as a beautiful Turkish beggar girl. She is stained a light mahogany color, and she wears millions of pearl beads and a marvelous head-dress of beads and veiling. It is the best work of her Universal career.

Irene Rich and Will Rogers have completed their fourth Goldwyn picture together. Sort of "Beauty and the Beast" combination—but how that homely, witty star can twitch a fellow's heart strings in a sympathetic scene!

Charles Ray, erstwhile Ince star, is to be seen in some of the best known plays and stories. To begin with, as head of his own company, he will give us the screen version of George M. Cohan's famous play, "45 Minutes from Broadway." Charles will, of course, have Cohan's old part, the sophisticated youth, "Kid Burns."

Corinne Griffith, Vitagraph star, would be beautiful in rags. We saw her at the studio, made up for a scene in "Deadline at Eleven," togged out in riding clothes and we thought her more stunning than dressed in her daintiest party frock. She gave it that touch of feminine charm, not possible even in evening dress.

Huckleberry Finn, were he alive to-day, would be pleased with the youngster who impersonates him on the screen as Mark Twain's boy hero. Lewis Sargent is fifteen, freckle-faced and red-headed, and has led just about the same life as Huck, but has been appearing in pictures for the past three years.

Why go to Paris or any other big fashion center to enjoy a real "Parisian Fashion Show?" In "Leave It to Me," William Russell's new Fox picture, the costumes worn by the feminine members of the cast are the last word in the way of designs for the coming season.

Helene Chadwick and her delicate beauty is one of the main reasons why you should see "The Cup of Fury," the screen version of Rupert Hughes's story. That and "The Street Called Straight," by Basil King, are two pictures that are worth seeing. The latter mostly because it shows that a story can be filmed without viciousness and vampires.

A letter from Harrison Ford contains the information that the girls are already after him. He has had a leap year proposal from a girl in Jackson, Miss. Mr. Ford is leading man for Ethel Clayton in her Famous Players-Lasky, "A Lady in Love." We are not at all surprised at the Jackson miss.

Irene Castle introdrces a new style riding habit in her Famous Players-Lasky, "The Amateur Wife." Jodhphur breeches, which are worn in India by men—long trouser effect over short boots. Only a very slim woman could wear Jodhphur breeches gracefully, and Irene Castle, we believe, is the one woman in America to don them, and carry well.

Shirley Mason, the petite Fox star, "ninety-five pounds of pep, personality and prettiness," has completed her second picture, "Molly and I." Her next will be "Love's Harvest" from the pen of Pearl Doles Bell, author of Shirley's "Her Elephant Man," in which she made her Fox debut as a star.

$5,000.00

IN CASH PRIZES

for Original Short Stories of Present-Day Life for Publication in

The Black Cat

The Prizes Are:

1st Prize	- - - - - - -	$2,000
2nd "	- - - - - - -	1,200
3rd "	- - - - - - -	700
4th "	- - - - - - -	500
5th "	- - - - - - -	300
6th "	- - - - - - -	200
7th "	- - - - - - -	100

THE prize winning stories will be stories of plot, of action, of interesting complication —stories that are meaty and fast-moving, yet both real and reasonable. Spend the sweat of your brow on deeds, not on acute character analysis; on big situations, on suspense and appeal, not on tedious description and fine writing.

The check pulling stories will be the stories of BIG IDEAS, LOGICALLY and POWERFULLY developed.

Write about present-day life, and avoid the morbid, gruesome, supernatural and unpleasantly tragic. No dialect stories will be considered.

Conditions

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full; also the number of words in the story, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000. Do not exceed the latter number.

2. Each manuscript must be typewritten on standard size paper (8½ x 11 inches); must be sent flat or folded, but ***not rolled,*** postage or express charges fully prepaid, and accompanied by stamped addressed envelope for return. Letters concerning stories submitted must be enclosed with manuscripts—not sent under separate cover. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at the writer's risk.

3. Every manuscript will be judged purely on story-value, on its interest in plot and action;

and the name or reputation of a writer will carry no weight whatsoever.

4. All envelopes containing manuscripts should be plainly marked "Prize Contest" and addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th St., New York, N. Y." Their receipt will be acknowledged. Any competitor may send as many stories as he pleases, but in each case he must comply with all the above conditions.

5. Failure of any manuscript to fulfill all the above requirements will automatically eliminate it.

6. The competition will close June 30, 1920, and within sixty days of that date the awards will be announced in THE BLACK CAT and paid in cash. All stories submitted in the competition that are found to be acceptable for publication in THE BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and all stories thus accepted will be published with the statement "Entered in THE BLACK CAT Prize Story Con-

test." Prizes will be in addition to the regular rates. The publishers make this provision for payment at regular rates and early publication of prize entries because they recognize the fact that many writers do not wish to tie up marketable material for the long period required to make the awards. Decisions will be made as promptly as possible and all unacceptable manuscripts returned. All manuscripts received in envelopes postmarked later than June 30th, 1920, will be considered for publication, but will not be received as entries in the Prize Contest.

All conditions and requirements being here fully set forth, the editors cannot undertake to enter into correspondence relative thereto.

The Black Cat

THE BLACK CAT MAGAZINE INC., *Publishers*
229 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York, N. Y.

Is Your Blood Starving For Want of Iron?

Modern Methods of Cooking and Living Have Made an Alarming Increase in Iron Deficiency in Blood of American Men and Women.

Why Nuxated Iron so Quickly Helps Build Up Weak, Nervous, Run-Down Folks—Over 3,000,000 People Annually Taking It to Increase Their Strength, Power, Energy and Endurance.

"Is your blood starving for want of iron? If you were to go without eating until you became weak, thin and emaciated, you could not do a more serious harm to yourself than when you let your blood literally starve for want of iron—iron that gives it strength and power to change food into living tissue," says Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York, and the Westchester County Hospital.

"Modern methods of cooking and the rapid pace at which people of this country live has made such an alarming increase in iron deficiency in the blood of American men and women that I have often marveled at the large number of people who lack iron in the blood, and who never suspect the cause of their weak, nervous, rundown state. Lack of iron in the blood not only makes a man a physical and mental weakling, nervous, irritable, easily fatigued, but it utterly robs him of a virile force, that stamina and strength of will which are so necessary to success and power in every walk of life. It may also transform a beautiful, sweet-tempered woman into one who is cross, nervous and irritable.

"But in my opinion you can't make strong, keen, forceful men and healthy rosy-cheeked women by feeding them on metallic iron. The old forms of metallic iron must go through a digestive process to transform them into organic iron—Nuxated Iron—before they are ready to be taken up and assimilated by the human system. Notwithstanding all that has been said and written on this subject by well-known physicians, thousands of people still insist in dosing themselves with metallic iron simply, I suppose, because it costs a few cents less. I strongly advise readers in all cases to get a physician's prescription for organic iron—Nuxated Iron—or if you don't want to go to this trouble, then purchase only Nuxated Iron in its original packages and see that this particular name (Nuxated Iron) appears on the package. If you have taken preparations such as Nux and Iron and other similar iron products and failed to get results, remember that such products are an entirely different thing from Nuxated Iron."

In commenting upon the value of Nuxated Iron as a means for creating red blood, strength and endurance, Dr. George H. Baker, formerly physician and surgeon, Monmouth Memorial Hospital, New Jersey, says:

"What women need to put roses in their cheeks and the spring-time of life into the step is not cosmetics or stimulating drugs, but plenty of rich pure red blood. Without it no woman can do credit to herself or to her work. Iron is one of the greatest of all strength and blood-builders and unless this iron is obtained from our food it must be supplied in some form that is easily assimilated if we want to possess power, energy and endurance, I have found nothing in my experience so effective for helping to make strong, healthy red-blooded men and women as Nuxated Iron. From a careful examination of the formula and my own tests of Nuxated Iron, I feel convinced that it is a preparation which any physician can take himself or prescribe for his patients with the utmost confidence of obtaining highly beneficial and satisfactory results. The fact that Nuxated Iron is to-day being used by over three million people annually as a tonic, strength and blood-builder is in itself an evidence of tremendous public confidence and I am convinced that if others would take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak and run-down, it would help make a nation of stronger, healthier men and women."

Manufacturers' Note: Nuxated Iron which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians is not a secret remedy but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated and does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

The Demand for Good Motion Picture Stories Exceeds the Supply

5000 New Photoplays Wanted This Year

Paul Schofield
A year ago he was a rank outsider. He studied the Palmer Plan. To-day he is under a 2-year contract as staff writer with Thos. H. Ince Studios.

MOTION picture producers believe there are thousands of men and women who have story-ideas that will make screen successes. They want you to try. Literary genius is not essential.

Writing stories is different from writing photoplays. People with imagination who know the fundamental principles required by producers can make good money in spare time. One accepted idea or story in proper form will more than repay you for your efforts.

A few years ago, you went to the moving pictures for the novelty of it. But to-day you want to see a real play. As a result, producers are in dire need of good, new story-plots. The Los Angeles studios alone need over 5,000 new motion picture stories this year.

$250 to $2,000 for Workable Stories

So alarming is this famine in photoplays, that producers and stars are combing the country for new writers. Present successful motion picture writers can't supply the demand.

Producers must have material — new plots especially written for motion pictures. They are paying $100 to $500 for a comedy; $250 to $2,000 for a five-reel dramatic script.

One of our members was paid $3,000 for his first accepted story. James Kendrick of Texas has sold six stories since enrolling a year ago. Many of our members have taken staff positions in studios.

The Palmer Plan Endorsed by Producers and Stars

Successful photoplay writing is not a complex, mysterious proposition, but a fascinating art based on certain fundamental principles.

The Palmer Plan explains it all in detail. It brings the studio to you through Correspondence. The Palmer Plan is not a tedious Course of home study, but pleasant and interesting. It shows how photoplays are written and produced.

It is so clear that people from all walks of life are being developed by us. It is not theoretical; it is built on the experience of Frederick Palmer—the man who has written and had produced hundreds of successful photoplays.

Our Marketing Bureau is in constant touch with studios, knows their needs, and helps you sell your stories.

Special Contributors

A series of 12 lectures covering every phase of the motion picture industry is supplied by such people as Frank Lloyd and Clarence Badger, Goldwyn directors; Jeanie McPherson, noted Lasky scenario writer; Col. Jasper Ewing Brady, of Metro's scenario staff; Denison Clift, Fox scenario editor; Geo. Beban, celebrated actor and producer; Al E. Christie, president Christie Film Co.; Hugh McClung, expert cinematographer, etc., etc.

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The most notable figures in the motion picture industry direct the work of developing new writers: **Cecil B. De Mille**, Director-General of Famous Players-Lasky Corporation; **Thomas H. Ince**, head of Thomas H. Ince Studios; **Lois Weber**, America's greatest woman producer and director; **Rob Wagner**, motion picture writer for Saturday Evening Post.

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Please send me, without obligation, your new book, "The Secret of Successful Photoplay Writing." Also "Proof Positive," containing Success Stories of many Palmer members, etc.

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